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ESSAYS AND REVIEWS.

VOL. I.

ESSAYS AND REVIEWS.

BY

EDWIN P. WHIPPLE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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ESSAYS AND REVIEWS.

MACAULAY.*

It is impossible to cast even a careless glance over the literature of the last thirty years, without perceiving the prominent station occupied by critics, reviewers and essayists. Criticism, in the old days of Monthly Reviews and Gentlemen's Magazines, was quite an humble occupation, and was chiefly monopolized by the "barren rascals" of letters, who scribbled, sinned and starved, in attics and cellars; but it has since been almost exalted into a creative art, and numbers among its professors some of the most accomplished writers of the age. Dennis, Rhymer, Winstanley, Theophilus Cibber, Griffiths, and other "eminent hands," as well as the nameless contributors to defunct periodicals, have departed, body and soul, and left not a wreck behind; and their places have been supplied by such men as Coleridge, Carlyle, Macaulay, Lamb, Hazlitt, Jeffrey, Wilson, Gifford, Mackintosh, Sydney Smith, Hallam, Campbell, Talfourd, and Brougham. Indeed, every celebrated

* Boston Miscellany, February, 1843.

writer of the present century, without, it is believed, a solitary exception, has dabbled or excelled in criticism. It has been the road to fame and profit, and has commanded both applause and guineas, when the unfortunate objects of it have been blessed with neither. Many of the strongest minds of the age will leave no other record behind them than critical essays and popular speeches. To those who have made criticism a business, it has led to success in other professions. The Edinburgh Review, which took the lead in the establishment of the new order of things, was projected in a lofty attic by two briefless barristers and a titheless parson; the former are now lords, and the latter is a snug prebendary, rejoicing in the reputation of being the divinest wit and wittiest divine of the age. That celebrated journal made reviewing more respectable than authorship. It was started at a time when the degeneracy of literature demanded a sharp vein of criticism. Its contributors were men who possessed talents and information, and so far held a slight advantage over most of those they reviewed. Grub-street quarterly quaked to its foundations, as the northern comet shot its portentous glare into the dark alleys where bathos and puerility buzzed and hived. The citizens of Brussels, on the night previous to Waterloo, were hardly more terror-struck, than the vast array of fated authors who, every three months, waited the appearance of the baleful luminary, and, starting at every sound which betokened its arrival,

> "Whispered with white lips, the foe! it comes! it comes!"

In the early and palmy days of the Review, when reviewers were wits, and writers were hacks, the shore

of the great ocean of books was "heaped with the damned like pebbles." Like an "eagle in a dovecote," it fluttered the leaves of the Minerva Press, and stifled the weak notes of imbecile elegance, and the dull croak of insipid vulgarity, learned ignorance, and pompous humility. The descent of Attila on the Roman empire was not a more awful visitation to the Italians, than the fell swoop of the Edinburgh Review on the degenerate denizens of Grub-street and Paternoster Row. It carried ruin and devastation whithersoever it went, and in many cases it carried those severe but providential dispensations to the right places, and made havoc consistent both with political and poetic justice. The Edinburgh reviewers, indeed, were found not to be of the old school of critics. They were not contented with the humble task of chronicling the appearance of books, and meekly condensing their weak contents for the edification of lazy heads; but when they deigned to read and analyze the work they judged, they sought rather for opportunities to display their own wit and knowledge, than to flatter the vanity of the author, or to increase his readers. Many of their most splendid articles were essays rather than reviews. The writer whose work afforded the name of the subject was summarily disposed of in a quiet sneer, a terse sarcasm, or a faint panegyric, and the remainder of the article hardly recognized his existence. It is to these purely original contributions, written by men of the first order of talent, that the Review owes most of its reputation; and their frequent appearance has exalted it above all other periodicals of the age, and has atoned for its frequent injustice to authors, its numerous inconsistencies, and its many supposed heresies in taste, philosophy and religion.

Among the many noted critics and essayists who have made the great quarterly their medium of communication with the public, there is none who has obtained a wider celebrity, or justified his popularity by compositions of more intrinsic excellence, than Thomas Babington Macaulay. He began to contribute to the Review when it appeared to be passing from the green into the yellow leaf of public favor, and his articles commanded immediate attention, and gave it new life and brilliancy. The estimation in which he was early held is evinced by the remark of Mackintosh, that he was master of every species of composition, — a saying which obtained for both a clumsy sneer from Blackwood's Magazine. From the year 1825 to the present period, Macaulay has continued his connection with the Review. There probably never was a series of articles communicated to a periodical, which can challenge comparison with those of Macaulay for effectiveness. They are characterized by many of the qualities of heart and mind which stamp the productions of an Edinburgh reviewer; but in the combination of various excellences, they far excel the finest efforts of the class. As nimble and concise in wit as Sydney Smith; an eye quick to seize all those delicate refinements of language, and happy turns of expression, which charm us in Jeffrey; displaying much of the imperious scorn, passionate strength, and swelling diction, of Brougham: as brilliant, and as acute in critical dissection, as Hazlitt, without his unsoundness of mind; at times evincing a critical judgment which would not disgrace the stern gravity of Hallam, and a range of thought and knowledge which reminds us of Mackintosh, — Macaulay seems to be the abstract and epitome of the whole journal, — seems the utmost that an Edinburgh

reviewer "can come to." He delights every one—high or low, intelligent or ignorant. His spice is of so keen a flavor, that it tickles the coarsest palate. He has the hesitating suffrages of men of taste, and the plaudits of the million. The man who has a common knowledge of the English language, and the scholar who has mastered its refinements, seem equally sensible to the charm of his diction. No matter how unpromising the subject on which he writes may appear to the common eye, in his hands it is made pleasing. Statistics, history, biography, political economy, all suffer a transformation into "something rich and strange." Prosaists are made to love poetry, tory politicians to sympathize with Hampden and Milton, and novel-readers to obtain some idea of Bacon and his philosophy. The wonderful clearness, point and vigor, of his style, send his thoughts right into every brain. Indeed, a person who is utterly insensible to the witchery of Macaulay's diction must be either a Yahoo or a beatified intelligence.

Some of the causes of this wide and general popularity may be discerned in a very superficial survey of Macaulay's writings. The brilliancy which is diffused over them all, the felicity of their style, and the strong mental qualities which are displayed in their conception and composition, strike us at a glance. Every page is brightened with wit, ennobled by sentiment, freighted with knowledge, or decorated with imagery. Thought is conveyed with equal directness and clearness. Knowledge, and important principles generalized from knowledge, are scattered with careless ease and prodigality, as though they would hardly be missed in the fulness of mind from which they proceed. History is made a picture, flushed with the hues of the imagination, and illu-

minated with the constant flashes of a never-failing wit. Compression, arrangement, proportion, — all the arts of which an accomplished rhetorician avails himself to give effect to his composition, — are used with a tact and taste which conceal from us the appearance of labor and reflection. The intricate questions of criticism and philosophy, the characters and actions of distinguished men, — poetry, history, political economy, king-craft, metaphysics, — are all discussed with unhesitating confidence, and without the slightest admixture of the pedantry of scholarship. Minute researches into disputed points of history and biography, large speculations on the most important subjects of human thought, seem equally to be the element in which the mind of the author moves. In convicting Mr. Croker of ignorance in unimportant dates, in giving a philosophical view of the progress of society, in analyzing the mental constitution of the greatest poets, in spreading before the mind a comprehensive view of systems in metaphysics, politics, and religion, he appears equally at home. His eye is both microscopic and telescopic; conversant at once with the animalculæ of society and letters, and the larger objects of human concern. Every felicity of expression which can add grace to his style, is studiously sought after and happily introduced. Illustrations, sometimes drawn from nature, but generally from a vast mass of well-digested reading, are poured lavishly forth, without overwhelming what they illustrate. The attention of the reader is continually provoked by the pungent stimulants which are mixed in the composition of almost every sentence; and the most careless and listless person who ever slept over a treatise on philosophy, cannot fail

to find matter, or manner, which rouses him from mental torpidity, and pleases him into pupilage.

If Macaulay thus obtains popularity in quarters where it is generally denied to thinkers, and monopolized by the last new novel, he is not the less calculated to win golden opinions from readers of judgment and reflection. Behind the external show and glittering vesture of his thoughts, — beneath all his pomp of diction, aptness of illustration, splendor of imagery, and epigrammatic point and glare, — a careful eye can easily discern the movement of a powerful and cultivated intellect, as it successively appears in the well-trained logician, the discriminating critic, the comprehensive thinker, the practical and far-sighted statesman, and the student of universal knowledge. Perhaps the extent of Macaulay's range over the field of literature and science, and the boldness of his generalizations, are the most striking qualities he displays. The amount of his knowledge surprises even book-worms, memory-mongers, and other literary cormorants. It comprises all literatures, and all departments of learning and literature. It touches Scarron on one side and Plato on the other. He seems master of every subject of human interest, and of many more subjects which only he can make interesting. He can battle theologians with weapons drawn from antique armories unknown to themselves; sting pedants with his wit, and then overthrow them with a profusion of trivial and recondite learning; oppose statesmen on the practical and theoretical questions of political science; browbeat political economists on their own vantage-ground; be apparently victorious in matters of pure reason in an argument with reasoning machines; follow historians, step by step, in their most minute researches, and adduce

facts and principles which they have overlooked; silence metaphysicians by a glib condensation of all theories of the mind, and convict them of ignorance out of Plato, Aristotle, Locke, or any other philosopher they may happen to deify; and perform the whole with a French lightness and ease of expression, which never before was used to convey so much vigor and reach of thought, and so large and heavy a load of information. His rapidity of manner, — at periods falling to flippancy and pertness, as well as rising to vivid and impassioned eloquence, — is calculated to deceive many into the belief that he is shallow; but no conclusion could be more incorrect; though, from the time-honored connection between learning and dulness, no conclusion is more natural. Macaulay's morbidly keen sense of the ludicrous prevents him from manifesting any of the pompous pedantry and foolish vanities of the lore-proud student, but rather sends him to the opposite extreme. His mind re-acts on all that passes into it. He possesses his knowledge, — not his knowledge him. It does not oppress his intellect in the least, but is stored away in compact parcels, ready at any time for use. It is no weltering chaos of undigested learning, stumbling into expression in bewildered and bewildering language, as is much which passes for great erudition; but it goes through the alembic of a strong understanding, — it is subjected to the scrutiny of a discriminating and weighty judgment, unshackled by authority, — it is made to glow and glitter in the rays of a vivid fancy. He tears away all that cumbrous phraseology which encases and obscures common truths, and which scares many good people into the belief that stale truisms are abstruse mysteries. He is not deluded by great names and "standard" books; his judgment is un-

trammelled by accredited opinions on taste, morals, government and religion; the heavy panoply of learning encumbers not the free play of his mind; he has none of the silly pride of intellect and erudition, but he seems rather to consider authors as men who are determined to make a fool of him if they can; he haughtily disputes their opinions, and treats their unfounded pretensions with mocking scorn; and he delights to cram tomes of diluted facts into one short, sharp, antithetical sentence, and condense general principles into epigrams. Few scholars have manifested so much independence and affluence of thought, in connection with so rich and varied an amount of knowledge.

As a critic of poetry and general literature, Macaulay manifests considerable depth of feeling; a fine sense of the beautiful; a quick sensibility; acuteness in discerning the recondite as well as predominating qualities of an author's mind, and setting them forth in clear, direct and pointed expression; and a comprehensive and penetrating judgment, unfettered by any rules unfounded in the nature of things. Intellectual and moral sympathy, the prominent quality of a good poetical critic, he possesses to as great a degree as could be expected, or perhaps tolerated, in an Edinburgh reviewer. He overrules or reverses, with the most philosophical coolness, many of the decisions made by Jeffrey, and other hanging judges among his predecessors; and awards justice to many whom they petulantly or basely condemned. For great authors, for the crowned kings of thought, for many poets who labor under the appellation of irregular geniuses, for statesmen of broad views and powerful energies, he can expend a large amount of sympathy, and in praise of their merits indulge in an almost un-

broken strain of panegyric; but for small writers he has little sympathy, toleration, or charity. The articles on Milton, Machiavelli, Bacon, Dryden, Byron, — the incidental references to Dante, Wordsworth, Shelley, Alfieri, Burke, Coleridge, — all display an ardent love of intellectual excellence, and a liberal and catholic taste. In other essays, as those on Sir William Temple, Clive, Hastings, Hampden, Mirabeau, Frederick the Great, Macaulay shows an equal power of judging of men of action, and summing up impartially the merits and defects of their characters and lives. Before all that is great in intellect and conduct, he bends the knee in willing homage, and praises with unforced and vivid eloquence. The articles on Milton and Hampden are noble monuments to the genius and virtue of the first, and the virtue and talents of the last. Throughout both, we see a strong, hearty, earnest, sympathizing spirit, in unchecked action. The keenness of judgment, likewise, displayed in separating the bad from the good, in the intellectual and moral constitution of many of his favorites among men of action and speculation, and tracing their errors of taste and faults of conduct to their true outward or inward source, is worthy of all admiration. The sharp analysis which stops only at the truth, is used with unsparing rigor in cases where enthusiastic apology would, in a scholar, be merely an amiable weakness. What Macaulay sees is not "distorted and refracted through a false medium of passions and prejudices," but is discerned with clearness, and in "dry light." He sacrifices the whole body of ancient philosophers at the shrine of Bacon; but he discriminates with unerring accuracy between Bacon the philosopher, and Bacon the politician, "Bacon seeking truth, and Bacon seeking for

the seals." He blushes for the "disingenuousness of the most devoted worshipper of speculative truth, and the servility of the boldest champion of intellectual freedom;" and remembers that if Bacon was the first "who treated legislation as a science, he was among the last Englishmen who used the rack; that he who first summoned philosophers to the great work of interpreting nature, was among the last Englishmen who sold justice." "The transparent splendor of Cicero's incomparable diction," does not blind Macaulay to the fact, that the great orator's whole life "was under the dominion of a girlish vanity and a craven fear." His respect for Frederick's military character extends not to his rhymes, but he treats them with as much disrespect as if they had proceeded from the merest hack that ever butchered language into bathos, or diluted it into sentimentality. This absence of idol-worship in Macaulay adds much to the value of his opinions and investigations, but at times it gives a kind of heartlessness to his manner, which grates upon the sensibility. In proportion as his praise is eloquent and hearty for what is noble and great in character, his scorn is severe for what is little and mean. In the dissection he makes of Bacon's moral character, and the cool unconcern with which he lays open to view his manifold frailties, we are often led to ask with Hamlet, "Has this fellow no feeling of his business?" In considering the lives of men of lofty endowments, we are often better pleased with the charity that covers a multitude of sins, than the stern justice which parades them in the light, and holds them up to abhorrence.

But if great men receive more justice than mercy from Macaulay, men of low intellectual stature fare worse.

He here manifests a spirit akin to Faulconbridge and Hotspur. There is no critic who is less tolerant of mediocrity. For half-bred reasoners, for well-meaning and bad-writing theologians, for undeveloped geniuses, for pompous pedantry, for respectable stupidity, for every variety of the tame, the frigid, and the low, he has an imperious and crushing contempt. There are many writers, also, who have a good reputation among what are termed men of taste, and whose works are, or should be, "on the shelves of every gentleman's library," whom he treats with a cool arrogance which shocks the nerves not a little. His critical severity almost actualizes the ideal of critical damnation. There is no show of mercy in him. He carries his austerity beyond the bounds of humanity. His harshness to the captive of his criticism is a transgression of the law against cruelty to animals. Among a squad of bad writers — if the simile be allowable — he seems to exclaim with the large-boned quadruped that danced among the chickens, "Let every one take care of himself!" He is both judge and executioner; condemns the prisoner, — puts on the black cap with a stinging sneer, — hangs, quarters, and scatters his limbs to the four winds, — without any appearance of pity or remorse. He subjects the commonplace, the stupid, the narrow-minded, to every variety of critical torture; he riddles them with epigrams, he racks them with analysis, he scorches them with sarcasm; he probes their most delicate and sensitive nerves with the glittering edge of his wit; he breathes upon them the hot breath of his scorn; he crushes and grinds them in the whirling mill of his logic; over the burning marl of his critical Pandemonium he makes them walk with unsandalled feet, and views their ludicrous agonies with mock

ing glee. All other reviewers are babes to him. A heretic in the grasp of a holy father of the Inquisition, — a pauper who has incurred the displeasure of the parish beadle, — a butterfly in the hands of a man of science, — all have reason to be thankful that destiny has saved them from the torment which awaits the dunce who has fallen into the clutch of Macaulay.

If murdered books could burst their cerements, and revisit the earth to haunt their destroyers, the sleep of Thomas Babington Macaulay would be peopled with more phantoms than the slumbers of Richard the Third. A collection of the authors from the middle and lower classes of literature, which this Nimrod of criticism, — this death-angel, Azrael, of letters — has sent to their long account, would somewhat resemble the "circle in a parlor," mentioned in Peter Bell: —

> "Crammed just as they on earth were crammed:
> Some sipping punch, some sipping tea,
> But, as you by their faces see,
> All silent — and all damned!"

It is to be feared that other motives than those which spring from an offended taste sometimes influence Macaulay's critical decisions. Political hostility, and the bitterness of feeling it naturally engenders, may be supposed to have edged much of the cutting sarcasm which is used so pitilessly in the wholesale condemnation of John Wilson Croker's edition of Boswell's Johnson. The purity of the critical ermine, like that of the judicial, is often soiled by contact with politics.

There is one quality of Macaulay's nature, and that, perhaps, the best, which is deserving of lavish eulogium, — his intense love of liberty, and his hearty hatred of despotism. Few authors have written more eloquently

of freedom, or paid truer and nobler homage to its advocates and martyrs; and few have opened hotter vials of wrath upon bigotry, tyranny, and all forms of legislative fraud. Tyranny is associated in his mind with all that is mean and hateful. In sweeping its pretensions from his path, in tasking every faculty of his intellect to search and shame the narrow hearts of its apologists, "his rhetoric becomes a whirlwind, and his logic, fire." His denunciation is frequently awful, in its depth, and earnestness, and crushing force. He holds no quarter with his opponents, and wars to the knife. His consummate dialectical skill, his unbounded sway over language, his wide grasp of thought and knowledge, the full strength of his passions, and the utmost splendor of his imagination, are ever ready at the call of free principles to perform any needed service,—to unmask the specious forms of disguised despotism, to overthrow and trample under foot the injustice which has lied itself into axioms. He then becomes enthusiastic and wholly in earnest, and his eloquence, in its torrent-like rush and fierce sweep, resembles that which he has so happily described as characterizing the forensic efforts of Fox—reason penetrated, and, as it were, made red-hot with passion. In numerous passages of his articles on Milton, Church and State, Constitutional History, and Hampden; and, especially, in the review of Southey's Colloquies on Society; he reasons with all the force and fire of declamation. Imagination, fancy, sensibility, seem all fused into his understanding. His illustrations are analogies; his images are pictorial arguments; the most gorgeous trappings of his rhetoric are radiant with thought. His intellectual eye pierces instantly beneath the shows of things to the things themselves, and seems almost to behold truth in clear

vision. In boldness of thought, in intellectual hardihood and daring, in vehement strength of soul, he excels most of the liberal statesmen of Europe. His essays are full of propositions which not a few honorable members of Congress would shrink from supporting, and yet there is in his writings an entire absence of all the cant and maudlin affectation of mouth-worshippers of freedom. Many passages might be selected, as indicating the liberality and clearness of his views respecting the just powers of government, and the rights of the governed. His opinions on the union of Church and State, show great comprehensiveness of thought, and extent of information. The advocates of the necessary connection between a good government and an established church are opposed with the full strength of his intellect and passions. The whole history of the Christian religion shows, he says, that "she is in far greater danger of being corrupted by the alliance of power than of being crushed by its opposition. Those who thrust temporal sovereignty upon her treat her as their prototypes treated her Author. They bow the knee and spit upon her; they cry Hail! and smite her on the cheek; they put a sceptre into her hand, but it is a fragile reed; they crown her, but it is with thorns; they cover with purple the wounds which their own hands have inflicted upon her, and inscribe magnificent titles over the cross on which they have fixed her to perish in ignominy and pain."

The imperious scorn, the bitter hatred, the unalloyed detestation, he feels for the meanness and manifold infamies which followed in the train of the "glorious restoration" of Charles II., inspire many a passage of vigorous argument, and glow and burn beneath many a

sentence of splendid rhetoric. After paying an eloquen tribute to the virtue, the valor, the religious fervor, of the Puritans, who wrought the first English revolution, he bursts out in a strain of indignant rebuke of the succeeding social and political enormities which paved the way to the second. "Then came those days never to be mentioned without a blush — the days of servitude without loyalty, and sensuality without love; of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices; the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds; the golden age of the coward, the bigot and the slave. The king, cringing to his rival that he might trample on his people, sank into a viceroy of France, and pocketed, with complacent infamy, her degrading insults and more degrading gold. The caresses of harlots and the jests of buffoons regulated the measures of a government which had just ability enough to deceive, and just religion enough to persecute. The principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the Anathema Maranatha of every fawning dean. In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James — Belial and Moloch; and England propitiated these obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children. Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race accursed of God and man was a second time driven forth, to wander on the face of the earth, and to be a byword and a shaking of the head to the nations." Not less severe is he upon the literature of that period. "A deep and general taint infected the morals of the most influential classes, and spread itself through every province of letters. Poetry inflamed the passions; philosophy undermined the principles; divinity itself, inculcating an abject reverence for the court, gave additional effect to its licentious example. The excesses

of the age remind us of the humors of a gang of footpads, revelling with their favorite beauties at a flash-house. In the fashionable libertinism, there is a hard, cold ferocity, an impudence, a lowness, a dirtiness, which can be paralleled only among the heroes and heroines of that filthy and heartless literature which encouraged it." Macaulay, likewise, is honest beyond most English writers in his view of the revolution which dethroned Charles I.; and points out the inconsistencies of that class of religionists and politicians who, "on the fifth of November, thank God for wonderfully conducting his servant King William, and for making all opposition fall before him until he became our king and governor! — and on the thirtieth of January contrive to be afraid that the blood of the royal martyr may be visited on themselves and children." Indeed, he always brings to the task of commenting on the history of his own country, a comprehensiveness of view, a freedom from prejudice, a love for free principles, and a picturesqueness and energy of diction, which make his historical essays among the most fascinating of compositions.

Yet, with all his fondness for speculative truth, with all his deep sense and detestation of injustice and corruption, with all his fine perception of the harmonious and true in literature and laws, there is hardly any statesman more thoroughly practical than Macaulay. He can sympathize with the great works of imagination, and his rhetoric revels in their praise and illustration; but he sympathizes with them merely as works of imagination, and he carries but few of his idealities into his view of actual life and established government. He tolerates no writer whose sensibility and imagination are predominant in discussing questions of national policy, of finance.

manufactures, commerce or laws; he allows the introduction of no Utopias into the living, breathing, sinning world of Fact. No mercy is shown to those who treat government as a fine art, and "judge of it as they would of a statue or picture;" and the mental constitution of political philosophers, who erect theories out of materials furnished from other sources than reason and observation, is analyzed with unrivalled dexterity and discrimination. All rant about the rights of man, all whining and whimpering about the clashing interests of body and soul, are treated with haughty scorn, or made the butt of contemptuous ridicule. Society is viewed as it is, and principles accommodated to the existing state of things. No man is denounced for acting or thinking in the sixteenth century what the sixteenth century acted and thought, or attacked because he did not accommodate his conduct to the principles of the nineteenth. To the discussion of all practical questions, he brings a practical logic, and an experience grounded on observation of the actual world. He would belong to that party which is just enough in advance of the age to be useful to it. But if he has little respect for impracticable theories of freedom, neither will he hold any terms with theoretical advocates or apologists of oppression. After scattering all arguments for a political institution, he often opposes its demolition, from expediency. He never allows the majesty of reason to be insulted with the thin sophisms used in palliation or defence of political and social abuses; but he is too little of an idealist in politics to suppose that, because those abuses are unfounded in reason, they are necessarily and altogether pernicious, and should be immediately overthrown. His

enthusiasm and imagination march in the train of his understanding, and never lead when they should follow.

After so wide a survey of Macaulay's merits, it is no more than proper to add some few remarks on his faults and deficiencies. These are few or many, as different tastes may decide. His marked mannerism of style would offend some; while others would bring against him the charge of being too much of the earth, earthy. Many might object to him, that his incessant brilliancy sometimes fatigues in the limits of an essay, and would be as intolerable as dulness itself in a volume; that, in attempting to give vividness to his diction, he is often overstrained and extravagant, and that his epigrammatic style seems better fitted for the glitter of paradox than the sober guise of truth; that he manifests too much dogmatism and superciliousness in discussion, and that propositions which lie across the path of his argument are too frequently disposed of by assertion instead of reasoning; that, with all his skill in dialectics, there are occasions in which he betrays a lack of logical honesty, and takes "truisms for his premises and paradox for his conclusion;" that too much of the inspiration of his wit comes from scorn and contempt, and is little restrained by kindliness of temper; that high philosophy and religion, in his writings, are rather considered as subjects for curious investigation, than as guides to life; that, with all his vehemence and intellectual hardihood in the cause of liberty, and the deep-toned passion with which he denounces tyranny and its corruptions, there is still little which shows a disposition to shed blood as well as ink in defence of free principles; that, with considerable power in painting martyrdom in alluring colors, and with a high respect for those who bravely meet with-

out fanatically seeking it, he is still not the man whom we might ever expect to see at the stake, or to behold starving on freedom; that, as an essayist and critic, he has not the benignity of disposition, the quiet tenderness, the calm beauty, of Talfourd, nor the intense brooding spirit, the inwardness, the "solemn agony," of Carlyle; all these, and many more objections, might be brought against Macaulay, — some of them true, some overstated, some unimportant, and none which should overbalance his claims to high rank among contemporary authors. The truth of the matter is, that the prominent characteristic of Macaulay's writings, and the source both of his merits and defects, may be comprised in one word — vigor. To this he often sacrifices simplicity, and occasionally even strict truth. Truisms he states with all the strength of passion; common historical events he narrates with all the brilliancy of epigram. He rarely "possesses himself in any quietness." Hence, with all his power of strong thought, he has no thoughtfulness. Byron displays hardly more intensity. Tediousness he seems to consider as a combination of the seven deadly sins of rhetoric; he carefully avoids it himself; he lashes it remorselessly in others. He has a nervous hatred, a fierce, haughty contempt, for commonplace, cant, feebleness of thought, meanness of expression, pomposity of manner, — in short, for all shapes and shades of dulness. The common faults and affectations of men of letters, he carefully avoids, and he labors to give all his productions a cosmopolitan air. Nothing that he writes is "sicklied o'er with the *pale* cast of thought." The level shadow of the Actual, in his mind, stretches far and wide into the sunny tract of the Ideal; and he is as much an utilitarian as a strong imagination.

and a fine taste for works of art, will permit. He listens to no voices from the land of dreams, and never labors to express the inexpressible. Almost every sentence in his essays is clear, sharp, pointed, direct, pictorial. He never whines, although he is not more deficient in sensibility than many authors who do little else. His quick sense of the ridiculous preserves him from cant and all its manifold sins. To give raciness and energy to his style, he has no hesitation in using phrases which young ladies might consider inelegant, and which Miss Betty would pronounce decidedly "low." His works overflow with antithetical forms of expression, and thoughts condensed into sparkling epigrams. The latter he seems to love with all the affection which Shakspeare had for puns. Sometimes they betray careful elaboration — at others, they have the suddenness of poetical inspiration. His page is brightened with them. Gleaming over the discussion of a question of taste, like incessant flashes of heat-lightning, — thrown off like glittering sparks, in the rush of his declamatory logic, — at one time used as the agreeable vehicle to convey an important truth, at another, the shining armor in which a paradox or a sophism is impenetrably encased — they seem almost native to his mind, and he to the "manor born." There are whole pages in his writings which must be interpreted according to the laws of epigram, instead of the proprieties of statement. That this love for pointed diction leads him into many errors, cannot be denied; but the blemish is so delightful that the reader no more thinks of making it a matter for grave critical accusation, than of quarrelling with Congreve for his excess of wit, or with Carlyle for his excess of spirituality.

It may now be asked by some sapient critics, Why

make all this coil about a mere periodical essayist? Of what possible concern is it to anybody, whether Mr Thomas Babington Macaulay be, or be not, overrun with faults, since he is nothing more than one of the three-day immortals, who contribute flashy and "taking" articles to a quarterly review? What great work has he written? Such questions as these might be put by the same men who place the Spectator, Tatler and Rambler, among the British classics, yet judge of the size of a contemporary's mind by that of his book, and who can hardly recognize amplitude of comprehension, unless it be spread over the six hundred pages of octavos and quartos. Such men would place Bancroft above Webster, and Sparks above Calhoun, Adams and Everett — deny a posterity for Bryant's Thanatopsis, and predict longevity to Pollok's Course of Time. It is singular that the sagacity which can discern thought only in a state of dilution, is not sadly gravelled when it thinks of the sententious aphorisms which have survived whole libraries of folios, and the little songs which have outrun, in the race of fame, so many enormous epics. While it can easily be demonstrated that Macaulay's writings contain a hundred-fold more matter and thought than an equal number of volumes taken from what are called, *par eminence*, the "British Essayists," it is not broaching any literary heresy to predict that they will sail as far down the stream of time as those eminent members of the illustrious family of British classics.

POETS AND POETRY OF AMERICA.*

This large and well-printed volume has been domesticated on our table for a long time, and although not publicly noticed, has not been forgotten. A review of it has held, for many months, a prominent place among our deferred projects and virtuous intentions. The book, however, has not thought proper to await our judgment before it commenced its tour of the country, but has quietly travelled through many States and four editions, and now returns our glance with all the careless impertinence inspired by success. That fickle-minded monster, called "the reading public," which sometimes buys and praises before it receives its cue from the reviewer, has taken the work under its own patronage, and spread before it the broad shield of its favor, as a protection against the critical knife. We hope, nevertheless, to be able to give it a sly thrust, here and there, in places where it is still vulnerable.

Mr. Griswold has prefixed to his book an eloquent, hopeful, and extenuating preface. This is followed by a lively and learned historical introduction, displaying much research, devoted to a consideration of the metrical mediocrity of the Colonies. He has disturbed the dust which had mercifully gathered around antiquated dog-

* The Poets and Poetry of America; with a Historical Introduction. By Rufus W. Griswold. Philadelphia: Carey & Hart. 8vo. pp. xxvi. and 476. — *North American Review, January*, 1844.

gerel and venerable bathos, with no reverential fingers; and his good taste has not been choked or blinded by the cloud he has raised. The common fault of antiquaries, that of deeming puerility and meanness invaluable because they happen to be scarce and old, and of attempting to link some deep meaning to what is simply bombast, affectation, or nonsense, he has avoided with commendable diligence. He makes no demand on our charity, in favor of some poetaster, for whom he may have imbibed a strange affection. He does not estimate the value of his antiquarian spoils by the labor and money expended in their acquisition; and has emerged from his resurrectionist delvings in the grave-yards of rhyme, without confounding moral distinctions, vitiating his taste, or becoming imbued with any malevolent designs against good composition or public patience.

The series of selections and biographies begins with Freneau, and ends with the Davidsons. Between these, Mr. Griswold has contrived to press into the nominal service of the Muses no less than eighty-eight persons, all of whom, it can be proved by indisputable evidence, did, at various periods, and inspired by different motives, exhibit their ideas, or their lack of ideas, in a metrical form. The editor is well aware that a strict definition of poetry would shut out many whom he has admitted. Much of the verse in his collection is not "the creation of new beauty, the manifestation of the real by the ideal, in 'words that move in metrical array.'" It is rather commonplace, jingling its bells at certain fixed pauses in its smooth or rugged march. To versify sermons is not to create beauty; nor can good morality be taken in apology for threadbare tropes. A morbid and uneasy sensibility may give a certain swell and gaudiness to diction with-

out the aid of imagination. A young gentleman, while groaning beneath some fancied woes, may ask for public commiseration in the husky utterance of grating rhyme, and yet display no depth and intensity of feeling. We think, therefore, that Mr. Griswold has "been too liberal of his aqueous mixture" in his selections. Some of the authors whom he has included in the list are unworthy of the honor of having their feebleness thrust into notice. From others of more pretensions he has copied too unsparingly. A few of his critical notices reflect more credit upon his benevolence than his taste. He seems to have fixed the price of admittance low, in order, as the show-bills say, that the public might be more generally accommodated. King James the First debased the ancient order of knighthood, by laying his sword on the shoulder of every pander or buffoon who recommended himself by the fulness of his purse, the readiness of his jests, or the pliancy of his conscience. Editors should keep this fact in mind, and extract from it the warning and admonition it is so eminently calculated to suggest.

Although we deem Mr. Griswold deserving of a little gentle correction for his literary beneficence and critical benignity, we are not insensible to his merits. The work before us must have demanded the labor of years. Those portions which are intrinsically the least valuable, undoubtedly cost the editor the most toil, and afforded him the least gratification. To hunt out mediocrity and feebleness, and append correct dates to their forgotten effusions, is an exercise of philanthropy which is likely to be little appreciated; and yet, in many instances, it was necessary, in order to give a fair reflection of the rhyming spirit of the country and the time. In the editor's wanderings in some of the secluded lanes of letters, he has

rescued from oblivion many poems of considerable value. He has been compelled to search for most of his facts in places only accessible to perseverance. Many of the poets from whom he has made selections have never published editions of their writings, and have never before been honored with biographies. He might easily have written better poems than some which he must have expended much time and labor in obtaining. The vanities and jealousies of his band of authors he was compelled to take into consideration, and to forbear giving them unnecessary offence. Among all the fierce enmities which a person may provoke by sincerely expressing his opinions, we know of none more dangerous than that which follows from informing a rhyming scribbler that his fame will not equal his ambition, or from omitting to notice him at all, out of commiseration for his well-meaning stupidities. We think, therefore, that Mr. Griswold has succeeded as well in his book as the nature of the case admitted; that his patient research and general correctness of taste are worthy of praise; that his difficulties and temptations would have extenuated far graver errors than he has committed; and that his volume well deserves the approbation it has received.

The labor of editing this book may be inferred from the number of writers quoted, exclusive of those who flourished previously to the Revolution. There are eighty-eight names on the list, all of whom are sketched, biographically and critically; and about sixty other writers mentioned in the Appendix, who are not thus honored. The editor has thus made extracts from the writings of nearly one hundred and fifty persons, very few of whom have been poets or prose-writers by profession. These selections extend over a period of sixty

years, but most of them are comprehended within the last twenty.

We have not been able to find a list of English poets and dramatists, from Chaucer to Anstey, which contains more than two hundred and twenty names. This includes many whose very names are unknown to the general reader, and many who have not written as well as the worst of our own rhymers. It extends over four centuries. It contains such names as Gower, Lydgate, Edwards, Gascoigne, Greene, Watson, Lyly, Constable, (1568,) Breton, Nash, Quarles, Nabbes, Catharine Phillips, Jasper Mayne, Hooke, Cotton, (1630,) Flatman, Etherege, Shadwell, Stepney, Lillo, Savage, Watts, Welsted, Carey, Shaw, Ferguson, as well as the eminent poets of each period. Indeed, the editors of selections from the English poets, even those who commence with Chaucer and include the great bards of the present century, have not thought proper to admit so many names as are included in Mr. Griswold's collection; and at the same time, they have selected many pieces which would confer no additional reputation upon Bryant, Longfellow, Willis, Dana, Halleck, Sprague, Percival, or Drake; and many also which American poets, of less pretensions, have excelled. Pinkney has written as well, to say the least, as many of the "mob of gentlemen" who were the boast of the times of Charles the First and Charles the Second; not so well as Lovelace and Carew, but better than Sedley, Etherege, and Dorset There are few songs, if we except those of Burns and Moore, which have more lyric flow and hearty sentiment than the best of Hoffman's. Tom Warton has not written better sonnets than some of Benjamin's. Gallagher and Street have a finer feeling for the beauties

and sublimities of natural scenery, and more felicity in giving it expression, than a large number of English descriptive poets of the second class. Sargent has written of the sea with more freshness and graphic power, with more true fancy and poetic feeling, than Falconer, or many others of a higher reputation. A richness of diction, a warmth of imagination, and a tenderness of sentiment, distinguish many of the occasional compositions of Tuckerman, and especially his "Spirit of Poetry," which are not often found in the poetical contributions to those English periodicals in which transatlantic verse is rarely mentioned without ridicule or affected contempt.

We have no desire to exalt American poetry above its merits. We are sensible of its deficiencies, as compared with the great creations of English genius. We know that much which circulates in the United States, in the shape of rhyme, is nothing more than rhyme. But it appears to us quite absurd, that in a country whose literature is stained with so many metrical productions offensive to good taste and good morals, — a country which has had its Tom D'Urfeys, Aphra Behns, Shadwells, Settles, and Wolcotts, as well as its Shakspeare, Spenser, Milton, and Wordsworth, — a country whose miscellaneous and magazine verse is, at the present time, inferior to our own, — there should be so much willingness to express pity or contempt for the poetry of the United States. But it is one of the amiable peculiarities of John Bull to forget all his own past and present sins, in his zeal against the peccadilloes of his neighbors.

All countries peopled by civilized men must have many minor poets, who, with a moderate share of the poetical faculty, have considerable poetical feeling. Their com-

positions may not deserve much eulogium; they may merely remodel old images and repeat old forms of expression; they may rather reproduce than create; but their poetry often displays smooth versification, pure sentiment, and occasionally a happy thought. Almost all men "experience" poetry during some period of their lives; and it is often the case, that, in a moment of happy inspiration, a man of very inferior abilities may write a short poem excelling some of the efforts of men of the highest genius. We might select from Mr. Griswold's collection many pieces, which are better than some few poems included in editions of Wordsworth, Byron, Coleridge, and Scott. In the United States, there is a great number of such persons as we have indicated. The ease with which a moderate skill in versification is acquired, and the copious flood of poetic expressions which is poured into the mind of every school-boy, enable most men of taste and feeling to write what is called respectable poetry with great facility. Much rhyme is here produced by persons who have no direct connection with literature, and who set forth no claims to be admitted into the glorious company of creative minds. If their good-natured friends would only let them alone, they would never discover that they were more gifted than their neighbors. The danger is, that they will be too much elated by flattery, and at last seriously entertain the conceit, that they are great poets, who reflect honor upon the literature of their country. As every man has some friend connected with a newspaper or magazine, this danger is not so groundless as one may at first imagine.

The fact cannot fail to strike the least observant spectator, that most of our distinguished authors are engaged

in pursuits generally considered unfavorable to the efforts of genius. Sprague and Halleck obtain their livelihood by their pens, it is true; but not in any poetical sense of the phrase. Indeed, the least lucrative profession in the United States is that of authorship. Every prudent man avoids it as he does a pestilence. A writer who attempts to live on the manufactures of his imagination is continually coquetting with starvation. He spends his days in illustrating the ingenious theories of certain physiologists, who have tried to ascertain how little food will suffice for a man's stomach, and how little raiment for his back. Genius may be almost defined, as the faculty of acquiring poverty. Professional authors have ever been rudely bruised and battered by fortune. When so thin that they could not "sport a shadow i' the sun," a bailiff has generally served in its place. Garrets and cellars have been at once their homes and hiding-places. In their case, mendicity often trails mendacity along with it. Famine hollows their cheeks; disease lackeys their steps. Every proud worldling hisses out his scoff, and every ass lifts his hoof against them. They drink deep, not only of the Pierian spring, but of that fountain of self-contempt which is "bitterer to drink than blood." They die at last, some by their own hands, some by insanity, some of famine, some of absolute weariness, and some of "helpless, hopeless brokenness of heart," —

> "Hiding from many a careless eye
> The scorned load of agony."

We must confess that such dark and petulant fancies as these always flit through our minds, when we hear the constantly repeated regret, that a favorite author has

not made literature his profession. The reasons why he has not done so are plain. He has common, as well as uncommon, sense; he deems pain and starvation evils which should be avoided; he thinks a good home and the certainty of a dinner better than a garret and heaven-soaring imaginations. Such men as Sprague and Halleck have displayed as much wisdom in their conduct as genius in their writings. They certainly would not have written so well, had their muse been stimulated to exertion by hunger, or their fine faculties been let out to some "enterprising" bookseller, and forced into whatever channels of quackery and deceit the demands of "the trade" required. Professional authors are apt either to sneer at a banker or merchant who obtains applause for transient literary offerings, or to attempt to lure him by lying idealities into their own Slough of Despond. There is hardly a hack in Great Britain who has not, either in penny newspaper or sentimental magazine, directed his pop-gun of wit against Samuel Rogers, the banker and poet. Men who get a living, or an epitaph, by the pursuits of literature, seem to think that no person has a right to be clever who is not something of a vagabond. We cannot admit that they are at all competent to decide the question, whether commerce or banking be inimical to poetry. Bank-notes, it is to be regretted, visit their pockets too rarely to make them anything but dogmatists in deciding on their poetical or prosaic nature.

Charles Sprague, one of the best poets in Mr. Griswold's multitudinous collection, has always been engaged in pursuits connected with commerce, and his poems are therefore the products of his leisure. His poetical compositions may be readily divided into two classes:

those written for special occasions, and in some degree manufactured to order; and those which commemorate events in his domestic life, and which accordingly have more of the heart's spontaneous music. Although those of the first class display to greater advantage his skill in versification, and the extent of his intellectual resources, they are not so instinct with the poetical spirit as his less ambitious efforts. His prologues are the best which have been written since the time of Pope. His "Shakspeare Ode" has hardly been exceeded by anything in the same manner, since Gray's "Progress of Poetry." But the true power and originality of the man are manifested in his domestic pieces. "The Brothers," "I see Thee still," and "the Family Meeting," are the finest consecrations of natural affection in our literature. The pathos of Bryant is so deeply tinged with the spirit of meditation, that it is rather the philosophy of grief than its direct expression. His regrets flow through his reason and imagination, but those of Sprague seem to gush directly from the heart. There is a purity, a sweetness, a true home-like feeling, in the little domestic pieces of the latter, to which none but a fribble or a *roué* can be insensible. They can be read again and again, with a delight which is ever renewed. The true soul of human affection is in them, and "waxes not old." A composition which dazzles at first sight by gaudy epithets, or brilliant turns of expression, or glittering trains of imagery, may fade gradually from the mind, and leave no enduring impression; but words which flow fresh and warm from a full heart, and which are instinct with the life and breath of human feeling, pass into household memories, and partake of the immortality of the affections from which they spring.

The spiritual tone of these beautiful embodiments of sensibility is exquisitely fine and touching; and the tone of a poem is, after all, its most enduring excellence. Images, metaphors, subtle and delicate phrases, may glide away from the mind, and yet the soul by which they were animated remain. There is much confusion produced in criticism by not discriminating between the form and the essence of poetry. In "Childe Harold" there is probably displayed more of the radiant vesture of the imagination than in any poem of the present age; yet the tone of one half of that splendid apotheosis of misanthropy and egotism is unpoetical. Its effect is merely to stir and to sting. It leaves an impression on the memory which may be called almost disagreeable. We feel that the author's spiritual life was inharmonious, — that the tone of his mind was not pure. On the other hand, in many of Wordsworth's early compositions, where the versification is harsh or slovenly, and the diction mean and meagre, the tone is often fine and poetical, the "white radiance" of his soul shining through his homeliest verbal expression. To attempt to analyze the tone of a poem would be useless. It is an object of inward perception. It is

> "The viewless spirit of a lovely sound,
> A living voice, a breathing harmony,
> A bodiless enjoyment."

It may be compared to the murmur of a brook as heard in a dream. When good, it is the very music of a soul which contains no jarring string.

The tone of Sprague's domestic poems is, as we have already stated, very pure and harmonious. The swelling diction, the wide command of language and imagery

the deliberate and elaborated frenzy, of his long odes, will hardly bear comparison, in point of true poetic excellence, with his quiet pictures of fireside joys and sorrows. The latter illustrate the truth, that gentleness is power. There is more real strength in them than in all the clang and clatter which words can be easily made to produce, when employed by a cunning rhetorician. We extract the little poem of "The Brothers," in illustration of our meaning. No dominion over the mere shows of poetical expression could enable a man, without a full heart, to write anything equal to it.

"We are but two, — the others sleep
Through Death's untroubled night:
We are but two, — oh! let us keep
The link that binds us bright.

"Heart leaps to heart, — the sacred flood
That warms us is the same;
That good old man — his honest blood
Alike we fondly claim.

"We in one mother's arms were locked, —
Long be her love repaid;
In the same cradle we were rocked,
Round the same hearth we played.

"Our boyish sports were all the same,
Each little joy and woe; —
Let manhood keep alive the flame
Lit up so long ago.

"We are but two, — be that the band
To hold us till we die;
Shoulder to shoulder let us stand,
Till side by side we lie."

In the lines on the death of M. S. C., there is much mournful beauty and tenderness.

"I knew that we must part, — day after day
I saw the dread Destroyer win his way;
Feeble and slow thy once light footstep grew,
Thy wasting cheek put on Death's pallid hue.
Thy thin, hot hand to mine more weakly clung,
Each sweet 'Good-night' fell fainter from thy tongue.
* * * * * *
Then like tired breezes didst thou sink to rest;
Nor one, one pang the awful change confessed.
Death stole in softness o'er that lovely face,
And touched each feature with a new-born grace;
On cheek and brow unearthly beauty lay,
And told that life's poor cares had passed away!
In my last hour be Heaven so kind to me!
I ask no more but this, — to die like thee!"

We cannot resist the desire to make two more extracts from this little collection of domestic pieces.

"I see thee still!
Remembrance, faithful to her trust,
Calls thee in beauty from the dust;
Thou comest in the morning light,
Thou 'rt with me through the gloomy night;
In dreams I meet thee as of old:
Then thy soft arms my neck enfold,
And thy sweet voice is in my ear;
In every scene to memory dear
I see thee still!"

* * * * *

"We 're not all here!
Some are away, — the dead ones dear,
Who thronged with us this ancient hearth,
And gave the hour to guileless mirth.
Fate, with a stern, relentless hand,
Looked in and thinned our little band;
Some like a night-flash passed away,
And some sank lingering, day by day;
The quiet graveyard — some lie there,
And cruel ocean has his share —
We 're not all here!"

Mr. Griswold tells the story of a compliment paid to Sprague, which is worthy of note. A British officer discovered the poem of "Curiosity" straying about, orphan-like, in Calcutta, and in the absence of its father, adopted it as his own child, and gave it the first place among the progeny of his brain. After circulating widely in the East Indies as an English production, it was reprinted in London, and received the critical honors of the British press. The poem itself is deservedly popular, and Mr. Griswold has displayed good taste in printing the whole of it among his selections. The general harmony of its numbers; its agreeable alternations of sentiment and satire; its numerous pictures of life, character, and manners; its vigorous thought and brilliant wit, and the genial spirit which animates it throughout, are qualities which universally please. Though there is much honest and hearty indignation in the production directed against the follies and crimes of society, Sprague is hardly a satirist in any unkindly sense of the word. He lashes artifice and quackery with great force, it is true; but in doing it, he rather expresses the natural contempt and dislike of a clear-headed, right-hearted man for silliness and sin, than the labored invective of a didactic denouncer of mankind, edging rebuke with a venomous sneer, and more solicitous of antithesis than truth. He never dips his pen in scorn's "fiery poison." The spirit of beauty and humor seems to accompany and direct the sarcasm, whenever it is launched at the lighter branches of the fooleries and errors of the day; and it rarely becomes deep and uncompromising, except when it is shot at brazen infamy or brainless pretension. No one can read "Curiosity" without perceiving that its author has a most exact sense of moral distinctions, as well as a fine

perception of the ridiculous. The moral character unconsciously impressed on the poem would do honor to Channing.

Reference has already been made to Sprague's odes as productions displaying much forcible thought, metrical skill, and splendor of expression. But they have a mightier effect upon the ear than the heart. The life of the man does not circle through them with such intensity as in his less ornate and less mechanical poems. At times there is manifested, in the choice of the language and the movement of the verse, a disposition on the part of the author to lash his muse into exertion; and here and there, a tasteless or turgid epithet indicates that not always was he successful in "wreaking" his thoughts upon expression. No criticism, however, could justly represent them as any other than remarkable productions. A short extract from "The Centennial Ode" will serve as a specimen of his power in condensing thought and emotion into the smallest possible compass, without allowing them to run into obscurity.

"We call them savage, — oh! be just!
Their outraged feelings scan:
A voice comes forth, 'tis from the dust, —
The savage was a man!

"Think ye he loved not? Who stood by,
And in his toils took part?
Woman was there to bless his eye!
The savage had a heart!
Think ye he prayed not? When on high
He heard the thunders roll,
What bade him look beyond the sky? —
The savage had a soul!

"I venerate the Pilgrim's cause,
Yet for the red man dare to plead —

We bow to Heaven's recorded laws,
He turned to Nature for a creed;
Beneath the pillared dome
We seek our God in prayer;
Through boundless woods he loved to roam,
And the Great Spirit worshipped there."

From the writings of RICHARD HENRY DANA, Mr. Griswold has made copious extracts. Mr. Dana is, perhaps, our most original poet. No American productions, with which we are acquainted, are characterized by such intense subjectiveness, or bear so deep an impress of individuality, as those of the author of the "Buccaneer." We feel, in reading them, that the inward life of the man has found utterance in the rugged music of the poet. He seems never to have written from hearsay, or taken any of his opinions at second-hand. Perhaps this is to be attributed, in a great degree, to his habits of retirement. In this bustling and utilitarian age, when even poets become involved in politics and commercial speculations, and literally make a noise in the world, we do not often hear of a writer who keeps the even tenor of his way amid the surrounding fret and tumult, undisturbed by the petty vanities and selfish aims of active existence. Very few now follow the example of Isaac of old, and go out into the fields to meditate. The old law of composition is reversed. Men do not appear to write because they cannot help it, but to whip and goad their unwilling minds into expression by extraneous means. The morals and aspirations of Grub-street have worked their way into Paternoster Row. A low standard of excellence is established. Immortality is confidently predicted of very humble labors. Choice bits and morsels of thought and imagery, floating on the smooth stream of octosyllabic or seven-syllabled verse, are considered

infallible signs of creative genius. Many "immortal" reputations die every year. A spirit of dapper intellectual dandyism, of which elegant verbiage and a dainty and debilitating spiritualism are the outward shows and covering, infects too much of the popular verse. Vanity and avarice are accordingly the moving principles of much which should spring directly from sentiment and imagination. Authors of the second rank may now be divided into two distinct classes. The one strives to win the ear of the polite and refined at any sacrifice of heartiness and truth, and is prodigal of elegant imbecilities and insipid refinements; whilst the other pampers the taste of the vulgar with recitals of misery and crime, exhibits all the forms of melodramatic agony, and fills the page with the records of the hospital and the jail. Both classes are equally distant from nature and truth. No author ever acquired durable fame by his loyalty to merely conventional decencies and refinements, or by outrages upon taste and morals. Milton said, that no man could write epics who did not live epics. Since his time, Glover and Cottle have illustrated his remark in "Leonidas" and "Alfred." But this principle does not hold good in regard to the other forms of poetry; for men contrive to write lyrics, while they live economics.

Mr. Dana belongs to a very different class of authors from those whom we have just described. "Neediness, greediness, and vain-glory," have never been the sources of his inspiration. He has engaged in none of those enterprises which give a day's fame to ambitious mediocrity and aspiring weakness.

The mental powers displayed in his writings are of a high order. He possesses all the qualities which distin-

guish the poet, — acute observation of nature, a deep feeling of beauty, a suggestive and shaping imagination, a strong and keen, though not dominant sensibility, and a large command of expression. In description, he excels, perhaps, all his American contemporaries. Many of his stanzas are pictures, painted with few words. He is successful, also, in mingling thought and sentiment with description, and in evolving the spiritual meaning which underlies natural objects, without misrepresenting nature. He gives the sensible image with so much clearness and compression, that it becomes immediately apparent to the eye; and the language in which he pictures it forth is instinct with imagination, even when he superadds no direct sentiment or analogy. The fault in much fine descriptive poetry is in the accommodation of the appearance which an object presents to the eye, to the ideas which it suggests to the mind. The fancy seizes upon the material form and moulds it into new shapes, until the original and distinctive features are lost. There are some poets, who, although their perceptive faculties are not deficient in acuteness, are unable to see things as they really exist. Every object that passes into their consciousness from without undergoes a change. The powers of vision are unable to hold the sensible image in its exact shape and hue, and it is soon delivered over to passion, wit, or fancy, often to be moulded into grotesque and whimsical forms. The immaterialists and pantheists of poetry, looking at nature only for analogies, and denying her absolute existence, are apt to be too free with her forms and colors. But Dana, though intensely subjective and individual in the character of his genius, and strongly influenced by his mental habits and peculiarities in his

appreciation of natural scenery, rarely fails to convey correct representations of outward realities, even when he links a sentiment to them which minds differently constituted would deem unnatural. In him we rarely find "subjectivity leading objectivity in chains," as Hallam quaintly says of Malebranche. A few stanzas taken at random from "The Buccaneer" will prove that exact description and high imagination are capable of being united.

"But when the light winds lie at rest,
And on the glassy, heaving sea,
The black duck, with her glossy breast,
Sits swinging silently, —
How beautiful! no ripples break the reach,
And silvery waves go noiseless up the beach."

* * * * *

"'T is fearful, on the broad-backed waves,
To feel them shake and hear them roar;
Beneath, unsounded, dreadful caves;
Around, no cheerful shore.
Yet mid this solemn world what deeds are done!
The curse goes up, the deadly sea-fight 's won."

* * * * *

"The ship works hard; the sea runs high;
Their white tops, flashing through the night,
Give to the eager straining eye
A wild and shifting light."

* * * * *

"On pale, dead men, on burning cheek,
On quick, fierce eyes, brows hot and damp,
On hands that with the warm blood reek,
Shines the dim cabin lamp."

* * * * *

"A low, sweet voice, in starry nights,
Chants to his ear a plaining song;
Its tones come *winding up the heights*,
Telling of woe and wrong."

* * * * *

"As swung the sea with heavy beat,
Below, and hear it break
With savage roar, then *pause and gather strength*,
And then, come tumbling in its swollen length."

Indeed, Dana's descriptions of nature are so graphic, that the objects are perceived as if by the bodily eye. In the delineation of character, also, he is often very successful. Mat Lee, the Buccaneer, is one of those ideal beings, who become existences as real to the mind as any friend or enemy of whom we have had long experience. A few lines give him a place in the soul forever.

"Twelve years are gone since Matthew Lee
Held in this isle unquestioned sway;
A dark, low, brawny man was he;
His law, — 'It is my way.'
Beneath his thick-set brows a sharp light broke
From small gray eyes; his laugh a triumph spoke.

"Cruel of heart and strong of arm,
Loud in his sport and keen for spoil,
He little recked of good or harm,
Fierce both in mirth and toil;
Yet like a dog could fawn, if need there were;
Speak mildly when he would, or look in fear."

* * * * *

"Amid the uproar of the storm,
And by the lightning's sharp red glare,
Were seen Lee's face and sturdy form;
His axe glanced quick in air."

Dana's imagination is, perhaps, his greatest power. In the extracts we have made from "The Buccaneer," in illustration of other qualities, this faculty is prominent. Whether exercised in bodying forth abstract ideas, or in creating character, or in vivifying description, or in suggesting analogies, or in assisting to give that inex-

pressible tone to his compositions which analysis toils after in vain, — it seems limited by nothing but his sentiments. In the selection of his language, likewise, this faculty makes all his words embodied ideas, and a single epithet often performs the office of a stanza. It would be impossible to compress his style; for the short, sharp sentences are the perfection of brevity.

It would seem, from his published works, that there is a dark vein of despondency in his nature, which sometimes breaks out in morbid manifestations, in spite of the vigor of his intellect, and the fineness of his affections. His compositions have more "hearse-like airs than carols." Keenly sensible to moral distinctions, he feels intensely the sin and wretchedness of the world, and throws too sombre a coloring over his reflections upon humanity. He gazes into the awful gulfs of iniquity, which make a hell of many perverted bosoms, with the eye of conscience and religion; and is apt to transfer to the race some of the associations which such a contemplation suggests. A tinge of melancholy, mild, delicious, and dream-like, as in the "Little Beach Bird," is sometimes thrown over his verse, and adds to its mystical charm; but when this deepens into gloom, we feel that it results from the inharmonious action of his mind. Even in the latter case, however, bursts of sunshine from his imagination will occasionally "streak the darkness radiantly." A poet whose sensibility to grandeur and sublimity is deep, and whose mind has a feeling for the vague and the supernatural, is ever liable to be oppressed by dark moods, unless he has a sharp perception of wit and humor to modify the sombre tendencies of his disposition. In Dana, this melancholy never degenerates into misanthropy, and is never employed to pamper a

sublimed egotism, as in Byron. It is deeper, however and more intense, than the mournfulness we occasionally find in Wordsworth, Bryant, and other meditative poets. It seems to have its source in habits of solitary, intense, and brooding thought, and it pervades his writings like an invisible spirit.

Mr. Griswold says finely of BRYANT, that "he is the translator of the silent language of nature to the world." The serene beauty and thoughtful tenderness which characterize his descriptions, or rather interpretations of outward objects, are paralleled only in Wordsworth. His poems are almost perfect of their kind. The fruits of meditative rather than impassioned imagination, and rarely startling with an unexpected image or sudden outbreak of feeling, they are admirable specimens of what may be called the philosophy of the soul. They address the finer instincts of our nature with a voice so winning and gentle, — they search out with such subtle power all in the heart which is true and good, — that their influence, though quiet, is resistless. They have consecrated to many minds things which before it was painful to contemplate. Who can say that his feelings and fears respecting death have not received an insensible change, since reading "Thanatopsis"? Indeed, we think that Bryant's poems are valuable not only for their intrinsic excellence, but for the vast influence their wide circulation is calculated to exercise on national feelings and manners. It is impossible to read them without being morally benefited. They purify as well as please. They develop or encourage all the elevated and thoughtful tendencies of the mind. In the jar and bustle of our American life, more favorable to quickness and acuteness of mind than to meditation, it is well that

we have a poet who can bring the hues and odors of nature into the crowded mart, and, by ennobling thoughts of man and his destiny, induce the most worldly to give their eyes an occasional glance upward, and the most selfish to feel that the love of God and man is better than the love of Mammon. Metrical moralizing is generally offensive, from its triteness and pretension; but that of Bryant is so fresh and natural, mingles so unconsciously with his musings and imaginations, and bears so marked a character of truth and feeling, that even the most commonplace axiom receives a new importance when touched by his heart, and colored by his imagination. To make extracts from Bryant, in illustration of the qualities of his mind, would be almost an impertinence. His writings are too well known to need quotation of particular beauties.

Mr. Griswold remarks of PERCIVAL, "that he has all the natural qualities of a great poet; but lacks the artistical skill, or declines the labor, without which few authors gain immortality. He has a brilliant imagination, remarkable command of language, and an exhaustless fountain of ideas. He writes with a facility but rarely equalled, and when his thoughts are once committed to the page, he shrinks from the labor of revising, correcting, and condensing. He remarks, in one of his prefaces, that his verse is 'very far from bearing the marks of the file and the burnisher,' and that he likes to see 'poetry in the full ebullition of feeling and fancy, foaming up with the spirit of life, and glowing with the rainbows of a glad inspiration.'" To this *critique* it is necessary to add but little. The glow and sparkle of Percival's verse are often in the highest degree inspiring. The swell and sweep in his diction correspond with the

turbulence and joy of soul from which much of his poetry seems to gush. The mind of the reader is hurried along the stream of his verse, and readily adopts his changing moods. "The Prevalence of Poetry," "Consumption," "Clouds," "Morning among the Hills," "Genius Slumbering," "Genius Waking," "The Sun," and "New England," are all excellent, and evince his artistical ability, and the range of his genius. We say artistical *ability*, because most of Percival's poems indicate greater capacity in the writer than is directly expressed. "New England" is a lyric known to every school-boy; and its warm patriotism and kindling energy have disturbed the mind of many a youth, while attempting to pierce into the heart of some tough problem in Euclid. "May" is a little poem of exceeding beauty and sweetness, reflecting the very season it describes.

"I feel a newer life in every gale,—
The winds that fan the flowers,
And with their welcome breathings fill the sail,
Tell of serener hours,—
Of hours that glide unfelt away
Beneath the sky of May.

"The spirit of the gentle south-wind calls
From his blue throne of air,
And, when his whispering voice in music falls,
Beauty is budding there;
The bright ones of the valley break
Their slumbers, and awake.

"The waving verdure rolls along the plain,
And the wide forest weaves,
To welcome back its playful mates again,
A canopy of leaves.
And from the darkening shadow floats
A gush of trembling notes.

"Fairer and brighter spreads the reign of May;
The tresses of the woods
With the light dallying of the west-wind play;
And the full brimming floods,
As gladly to the goal they run,
Hail the returning sun."

In the "Prevalence of Poetry," we perceive the exuberance of Percival's mind displayed with fine effect. The fancy and sentiment of the piece seem to flow directly from the true inward sources of the ideal.

"The world is full of poetry — the air
Is living with its spirit; and the waves
Dance to the music of its melodies,
And sparkle in its brightness. Earth is veiled
And mantled with its beauty; and the walls
That close the universe with crystal in,
Are eloquent with voices that proclaim
The unseen glories of immensity,
In harmonies too perfect and too high
For aught but beings of celestial mould,
And speak to man in one eternal hymn,
Unfading beauty and unyielding power."

He evinces a thorough knowledge of what poetry is *not*, while he pours out his heart in praise of what poetry *is*.

"'T is not the chime and flow of words that move
In measured file and metrical array;
'T is not the union of returning sounds,
Nor all the pleasing artifice of rhyme,
And quantity, and accent, that can give
This all-pervading spirit to the ear,
Or blend it with the movings of the soul.
'T is a mysterious feeling, which combines
Man with the world around him, in a chain
Woven of flowers, and dipped in sweetness, till
He tastes the high communion of his thoughts
With all existences, in earth and heaven,

That meet him in the charm of grace and power.
'T is not the noisy babbler who displays,
In studied phrase, and noisy epithet,
And rounded period, poor and vapid thoughts,
Which peep from out the cumbrous ornaments
That overload their littleness. Its words
Are few, but deep and solemn."

Percival has less subjectivity, — less of the brooding, philosophizing spirit, — than any of his eminent contemporaries. His imagination, considered as a shaping faculty, is not so great as Dana's, Longfellow's, and perhaps Bryant's; but in fancy he excels them all. Indeed, the quickness with which the latter quality works, and the disposition of Percival to hurried composition, have not been favorable to the culture of high imaginative power. When the mind is really disturbed by the "fine frenzy," the imagination has no lack of activity in its motions; but when the poet, instead of being frenzied, is only a little "light-headed," it disdains to give its aid. In Percival, the feeling is often high and the verse winged, when the imagery is only common. His poems do not always seem adequately to convey the whole power of the mind from which they proceed.

Few poets in Mr. Griswold's motley collection excel Fitz-Greene Halleck in popularity. His metrical compositions, though not deficient in high qualities, do not require a very subtle taste in the reader in order to be appreciated. The frequent blending of serious thought and emotion with playful and careless fancies, enables him to pass at once for a man of sentiment and a man of the world. He has more of the faculty than the feeling of the poet. He reposes little faith in his own creations. He is hardly willing to plant himself with undoubting confidence upon the eternal principles of the soul, on which

the poetical is based, and avoid or repel the fleeting feelings and opinions which sometimes threaten and cloud their dominion. By the impertinence of his wit, he almost gives the impression that poetry is a mere juggle, and that he cares not to keep the secret. At times he places the ideal and the actual face to face, and remains himself an indifferent spectator of the result At others, he will evoke spirits from the vasty deep of imagination, only to point and fleer at them, when they have obeyed his call. He has few serious thoughts that are not more or less associated with ludicrous ideas. A little laughing imp seems to sit opposite the fountains of his heart, and dispel with the merry flash of his eye every shade and thin essence which rise in misty beauty from their surface. In perusing some of his poems, we are tempted to call him a man of pure sentiment and fine imagination ruined by reading "Don Juan." There are poetical powers displayed in "Marco Bozzaris," "Burns," "Woman," and others of his serious poems, which we dislike to see played with and perverted. To produce a shock of surprise by the sudden intrusion of an incongruous idea into a mournful or sentimental flow of feeling, is but little above the clap-trap of the stage. We are aware that, in Halleck's case, this is done in an inimitable manner, and that the effect on one's risible faculties is irresistible; but still, there are very few who desire to be choked with a laugh, at the very moment when the tears are starting from their eyes. It introduces a species of scepticism, which is destructive to the enjoyment of poetry. The loftiness, purity, and tenderness of feeling, which Halleck can so well express. when he pleases, and the delicate and graceful fancies with which he can festoon thought and emotion, should

never be associated with what is mean or ridiculous, even to gratify wit or whim. There is a kind of merry malevolence in the abasement of ennobling feelings and beautiful images, which is less pardonable than open scoffing, because more injurious. Perhaps, in Halleck, this mischievous spirit is to be referred, in some degree, to that fear of being sentimental which is apt to characterize robust and healthy natures.

It is quite common for the critics of LONGFELLOW's poetry to escape the trouble of analysis by offering some smooth eulogium to his taste, and some "lip-homage" to his artistical ability. Mr. Griswold satisfies his conscience by saying that "Longfellow's works are eminently picturesque, and are distinguished for nicety of epithet, and elaborate, scholarly finish. He has feeling, a rich imagination, and a cultivated taste." It seems to us that these terms are as applicable to other American poets as to Longfellow. They do not indicate the characteristics of his genius, or give a glimpse of the spirit by which it is pervaded. A person, in reading the "Psalm of Life," does not say that this poem is "distinguished for nicety of epithet, and elaborate, scholarly finish;" but rather, that this poem touches the heroic string of my nature, — breathes energy into my heart, — sustains my lagging purposes, — and fixes my thoughts on what is stable and eternal. Without questioning the artistical excellence of this poet, we still think that it is thrust forward too prominently in all notices of his writings. That which lies behind his style and mere mechanical skill should be first considered. The thought is of more importance than the manner of saying it. If the former be worthless, then the latter is not worth consideration. A poet who expresses nothing, with great

"nicety of epithet," or with "elaborate, scholarly finish," is still only good for nothing. The questions which are of real moment relate to qualities which lie deeper than rhetoric.

The great characteristic of Longfellow, that of addressing the moral nature through the imagination, of linking moral truth to intellectual beauty, is a far greater excellence. His artistical ability is admirable, because it is not seen. It is rather mental than mechanical. In truth, it may be doubted if he is more distinguished as an artist than Dana or Bryant. If, by saying that a poem is artistical, we mean that its form corresponds with its spirit, that it is fashioned into the likeness of the thought or emotion it is intended to convey, then "The Buccaneer" and "Thanatopsis" are as artistical as any of the "Voices of the Night." If mere skill in the use of multitudinous metres be meant, then Percival is more artistical than either. If mechanical ingenuity in forcing sentiment into forms to which it has no affinity be the meaning, then to be artistical is a fault or an affectation. The best artist is he who accommodates his diction to his subject, and in this sense, Longfellow is an artist. By learning "to labor and to wait," by steadily brooding over the chaos in which thought and emotion first appear to the mind, and giving shape and life to both before uttering them in words, he has obtained a singular mastery of expression. By this we do not mean that he has a large command of language. No fallacy is greater than that which confounds fluency with expression. Washerwomen, and boys at debating clubs, often display more fluency than Webster; but his words are to theirs as the roll of thunder to the patter of rain. Language generally receives its significance and power

from the person who uses it. Unless permeated by the higher faculties of the mind, — unless it be, not the clothing, but the creature, of thought, — it is quite an humble power. There are some writers who repose undoubting confidence in words. If their minds be filled with the epithets of poetry, they fondly deem that they have clutched its essence. In a piece of inferior verse, we often observe expressions which have been employed with great effect by genius, but which seem to burn the fingers, and disconcert the equanimity, of the aspiring word-catcher who presses them into his service. Felicity, not fluency, of language is a merit. There is such a thing, likewise, as making a style the expression of the nature of the writer who uses it. The rhetorical arrangement of Johnson is often pedantic, but it does not appear so bad in his writings as in the monstrous masses of verbiage beneath which the thin frames of his imitators are crushed. The style of Carlyle is faulty, when judged by the general rules of taste; but we should not desire that the rough gallop of his sentences should be changed for the graceful ambling of Addison's, without a corresponding change in his psychological condition.

Longfellow has a perfect command of that expression which results from restraining rather than cultivating fluency; and his manner is adapted to his theme. He rarely, if ever, mistakes "emotions for conceptions." He selects with great delicacy and precision the exact phrase which best expresses or suggests his idea. He colors his style with the skill of a painter; and in compelling words to picture thought, he not only has the warm flush and bright tints of language at his command, but he arrests its evanescent hues. In the higher department of his art, — that of so combining his words and

images that they make music to the soul as well as to the ear, and convey not only his feelings and thoughts, but also the very tone and condition of the soul in which they have their being, — he has given exquisite examples in "Maidenhood" and "Endymion." In what Mr. Griswold very truly calls one of his best poems, "The Skeleton in Armor," he manages a difficult verse with great skill. There is much of the old Norse energy in this composition, — that rough, ravenous battle-spirit, which, for a time, makes the reader's blood rush and tingle in warlike sympathy. But the manner in which the passions of the savage are modified by the sentiment of the lover, and the stout, death-defying heart of the warrior yields to that gentle but irresistible power which conquers without arms and enslaves without fetters, constitutes the great charm of the poem.

"Once as I told in glee
Tales of the stormy sea,
Soft eyes looked love on me,
Burning, yet tender;
And, as the white stars shine
On the dark Norway pine,
On that dark heart of mine
Fell their soft splendor."

It would be easy to say much of Longfellow's singular felicity in addressing the moral nature of man. It has been said of him, sometimes in derision, that all his poems have a moral. There is, doubtless, a tendency in his mind to evolve some useful meaning from his finest imaginations, and to preach when he should only sing; but we still think that the moral of his compositions is rarely thrust intrudingly forward, but rather flows naturally from the subject. There is nothing of the spirit of Joseph Surface in his genius; he does not pride him-

self on being a man of "noble sentiments." The morality of the "Psalm of Life" is commonplace. If versified by a poetaster, it would inspire no deep feeling, and strengthen no high purposes. But the worn axioms of didactic verse have the breath of a new life breathed into them when they are touched by genius. We are made to love and to follow what before we merely assented to with a lazy acquiescence.

> "Lives of great men all remind us
> We can make our lives sublime,
> And, departing, leave behind us
> *Footprints on the sands of time.*
>
> "Footprints that perhaps another,
> Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
> A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
> Seeing, shall take heart again."

This is very different from saying, that, if we follow the example of the great and good, we shall live a noble life, and that the records of our deeds and struggles will strengthen the breasts of those who come after us to do and to suffer.

Longfellow's verse occupies a position half way between the poetry of actual life and the poetry of transcendentalism. Like all neutrals, he is liable to attack from the zealots of both parties; but it seems to us that he has hit the exact point, beyond which no poet can at present go, without being neglected or ridiculed. He idealizes real life; he elicits new meaning from many of its rough shows; he clothes subtle and delicate thoughts in familiar imagery; he embodies high moral sentiment in beautiful and ennobling forms; he inweaves the golden threads of spiritual being into the texture of common existence; he discerns and addresses some of the finest sympathies of

the heart; but he rarely soars into those regions of abstract imagination, where the bodily eye cannot follow, but where that of the seer is gifted with a "pervading vision." Though he fixes a keen glance on those filmy and fleeting shades of thought and feeling which common minds overlook, or are incompetent to grasp, he has his eye open a little wider, perhaps, when its gaze is directed to the outward world, than when it is turned within. His imagination, in the sphere of its activity, is almost perfect in its power to shape in visible forms, or to suggest, by cunning verbal combinations, the feeling or thought he desires to express; but it lacks the strength and daring, the wide magnificent sweep, which characterize the imagination of such poets as Shelley. He has little of the unrest and frenzy of the bard. We know, in reading him, that he will never miss his mark; that he will risk nothing; that he will aim to do only what he feels he can do well. An air of repose, of quiet power, is around his compositions. He rarely loses sight of common interests and sympathies. He displays none of the stinging earnestness, the vehement sensibility, the gusts of passion, which distinguish poets of the impulsive class. His spiritualism is not seen in wild struggles after an ineffable Something, for which earth can afford but imperfect symbols, and of which even abstract words can suggest little knowledge. He appears perfectly satisfied with his work. Like his own "Village Blacksmith," he retires every night with the feeling that something has been attempted, and something *done.*

The intellectual tendencies of Longfellow, judging from the mystical charm which many of his poems possess, seem to be purely spiritual. But his keen sense of what is physically pleasurable keeps them in check,

and gives a more sensuous property to his imagination than what simply inheres in it. Were it not that young misses have made the phrase of equivocal meaning, we would call him "a beautiful poet." He has a feeling exquisitely fine for what is generally understood by the term *beauty*, — that is, for actual, earthly beauty, idealized and refined by the imagination, embodied in graceful shapes, or beheld in that soft, dreamy light of fancy, which makes it more witching to the senses than when seen in bolder outlines. There is a slight dash of epicureanism in his conception of the quality, when his sentiment and sensations are commingled by his imagination; and a sense of luxury steals over the heart, in reading many of his apparently most spiritualized descriptions.

His sense of beauty, though uncommonly vivid, is not the highest of which the mind is capable. He has little conception of its mysterious spirit; — of that Beauty, of which all physical loveliness is but the shadow, which awes and thrills the soul into which it enters, and lifts the imagination into regions "to which the heaven of heavens is but a veil." His mind never appears oppressed, nor his sight dimmed, by its exceeding glory. He feels, and loves, and creates, what is beautiful; but he hymns no reverence, he pays no adoration, to the Spirit of Beauty. He would never exclaim with Shelley, "O awful Loveliness!"

We say this rather to make a distinction than to note a fault; to show how far the spiritual element in Longfellow's poetry is modified by the sensuous properties of his genius, than to blame him for the combination. Indeed, by a majority of critics and readers, this combination is deemed a high merit. If they found any

fault with Longfellow, it would be, that he is too transcendental. It is the cant nowadays, that poetry is soaring beyond the ken of us "poor humans." A poet, who occasionally dwells in abstract imaginations, is pelted with pet epithets, and accused of lacking human sympathy. This arises, we think, from a too narrow definition of the term. It is true, that men have a quicker sense of their relations to external nature and to each other than to God; to shows rather than to substances; and their hearts are more readily kindled by what is addressed to their blood and physical temperament, than by what speaks to their spiritual nature. Still, he must be a daring and somewhat impudent person, who decides upon the whole reach of human sympathies by the range of his own, and calls that meaningless and unprofitable which his own heart echoes feebly or not at all. Lust, falsehood, and intemperance, have been so often idealized by poets, and have found so ready a response from "human sympathies," that in some minds they have become significant of the whole meaning of the phrase. If the term human weakness, or criminality, were substituted for it in many cases, there would be a gain to the science of definition. Every man has a theory of human sympathies to fit his own tastes; and his system is often so sharp a satire on his moral perceptions, that he would manifest much more prudence in its concealment than in shouting it forth in the markets and public places of criticism.

The sympathies which Longfellow addresses are fine and poetical, but not the most subtle of which the soul is capable. The kindly affections, the moral sentiments, the joys, sorrows, regrets, aspirations, loves, and wishes of the heart, he has consecrated by new ideal forms and

ascriptions. He inculcates with much force that poetic stoicism which teaches us to reckon earthly evils at their true worth, and endure with patience what results inevitably from our condition, — as in the "Psalm of Life," "Excelsior," "The Light of Stars," and in passages of other poems. "The Village Blacksmith" and "God's Acre" have a rough grandeur, and "Maidenhood" and "Endymion" a soft, sweet, mystical charm, which advantageously display the range of his powers. Perhaps "Maidenhood" is the most finely poetical of all his poems. Nothing of its kind can be more exquisitely beautiful than this delicate creation. It appears like the utterance of a dream. In "The Spanish Student," the affluence of his imagination in images of grace, grandeur, and beauty, is most strikingly manifested. The objection to it, as a play, is its lack of skill or power in the dramatic exhibition of character; but read merely as a poem cast in the form of dialogue, it is one of the most beautiful in American literature. None of his other pieces so well illustrates all his poetical qualities, — his imagination, his fancy, his sentiment, and his manner. It seems to comprehend the whole extent of his genius.

To write good comic verse is a different thing from writing good comic poetry. A jest or a sharp saying may be easily made to rhyme; but to blend ludicrous ideas with fancy and imagination, and display in their conception and expression the same poetic qualities usually exercised in serious composition, is a rare distinction. Among American poets, we know of no one who excels Holmes in this difficult branch of the art. Many of his pleasant lyrics seem not so much the offspring of wit, as of fancy and sentiment turned in a humorous direction. His manner of satirizing the foi-

bles, follies, vanities, and affectations of conventional life, is altogether peculiar and original. He looks at folly and pretension from the highest pinnacle of scorn. They never provoke his indignation, for to him they are too mean to justify anger, and hardly worthy of petulance. His light, glancing irony, and fleering sarcasm, are the more effective, from the impertinence of his benevolent sympathies. He wonders, hopes, wishes, titters, and cries, with his victims. He practises on them the legerdemain of contempt. He kills with a sly stab, and proceeds on his way as if "nothing in particular" had happened. He picks his teeth with cool unconcern, while looking down on the captives of his wit, as if their destruction conferred no honor upon himself, and was unimportant to the rest of mankind. He makes them ridicule themselves, by giving a voice to their motions and manners. He translates the conceited smirk of the coxcomb into felicitous words. The vacant look and trite talk of the bore he links with subtle analogies. He justifies the egotist unto himself by a series of mocking sophisms. He expresses the voiceless folly and affectation of the ignorant and brainless by cunningly contrived phrases and apt imagery. He idealizes nonsense, pertness, and aspiring dulness. The movement of his wit is so swift, that its presence is known only when it strikes. He will sometimes, as it were, blind the eyes of his victims with diamond dust, and then pelt them pitilessly with scoffing compliments. He passes from the sharp, stinging gibe to the most grotesque exaggerations of drollery, with a bewildering rapidity.

Holmes is also a poet of sentiment and passion. "Old Ironsides," "The Steamboat," "Qui Vive," and numerous passages of "Poetry," display a lyrical fire

and inspiration which should not be allowed to decay for want of care and fuel. In those poems of fancy and sentiment, where the exceeding richness and softness of his diction seem trembling on the verge of meretricious ornament, he is preserved from slipping into Della Cruscanism by the manly energy of his nature, and his keen perception of the ridiculous. Those who know him only as a comic lyrist, as the libellous laureate of chirping folly and presumptuous egotism, would be surprised at the clear sweetness and skylark thrill of his serious and sentimental compositions.

Of Willis G. Clark, Mr. Griswold writes: — "His metrical writings are all distinguished for a graceful and elegant diction, thoughts morally and poetically beautiful, and chaste and appropriate imagery." This praise is substantiated by the extracts which follow it. There is much purity and strength of feeling in many of Mr. Clark's poems. Though not marked by much power of imagination, they are replete with fancy and sentiment, and have often a searching pathos and a mournful beauty, which find their way quietly to the heart.

C. P. Cranch has worked with some success in the transcendental vein. The "Hours," "Stanzas," "My Thoughts," are specimens of the results of his labors. William Pitt Palmer, whose name we see occasionally flitting through the periodical world, has written a poem on "Light," in the stanza of Shelley's "Cloud," far superior in diction and imagery to a large portion of our miscellaneous poetry. Mr. Griswold would have done well to place him in the body of the volume, instead of the Appendix. He is worthy of a more prominent station than he occupies.

John Greenleaf Whittier is one of our most char-

acteristic poets. Few excel him in warmth of temperament. Old John Dennis, the Gifford of Queen Anne's time, describes genius as caused "by a furious joy and pride of soul on the conception of an extraordinary hint. Many men have their hints, without their motions of fury and pride of soul, because they want fire enough to agitate their spirits; and these we call cold writers. Others, who have a great deal of fire, but have not excellent organs, feel the forementioned motions, without the extraordinary hints; and these we call fustian writers." Whittier has this "furious joy" and "pride of soul," even when the "hints" are not extraordinary; but he never falls into absolute rant and fustian. A common thought comes from his pen "rammed with life." He seems, in some of his lyrics, to pour out his blood with his lines. There is a rush of passion in his verse, which sweeps everything along with it. His fancy and imagination can hardly keep pace with their fiery companion. His vehement sensibility will not allow the inventive faculties fully to complete what they may have commenced. The stormy qualities of his mind, acting at the suggestions of conscience, produce a kind of military morality which uses all the deadly arms of verbal warfare. When well intrenched in abstract right, he always assumes a hostile attitude towards the champions or exponents of abstract wrong. He aims to give his song "a rude martial tone, — a blow in every thought." His invective is merciless and undistinguishing; he almost screams with rage and indignation. Occasionally, the extreme bitterness and fierceness of his declamation degenerate into mere shrewishness and scolding. Of late, he has somewhat pruned the rank luxuriance of his style. The "Lines on the Death of Lucy Hooper,'

"Raphael," "Follen," "Memories," among the poems in his last published volume, are indications that his mind is not without subtle imagination and delicate feeling, as well as truculent energy. There is much spiritual beauty in these little compositions. It is difficult to conceive how the man who can pour out such torrents of passionate feeling, and who evidently loves to see his words tipped with fire, can at the same time write such graceful and thoughtful stanzas as these: —

"A beautiful and happy girl,
With step as soft as summer air,
And fresh young lip and brow of pearl,
Shadowed by many a careless curl
Of unconfined and flowing hair:
A seeming child in everything,
Save thoughtful brow and ripening charms,
As Nature wears the smile of Spring
When sinking into Summer's arms.

"How thrills once more the lengthening chain
Of memory at the thought of thee!
Old hopes, that long in dust have lain,
Old dreams, come thronging back again,
And boyhood lives again in me;
I feel its glow upon my cheek,
Its fulness of the heart is mine,
As when I learned to hear thee speak,
Or raised my doubtful eye to thine.

"I hear again thy low replies,
I feel thy arm within my own,
And timidly again uprise
The fringéd lids of hazel eyes,
With soft brown tresses overblown.
Ah! memories of sweet summer eves,
Of moonlit wave and willowy way,
Of stars and flowers and dewy leaves,
And smiles and tones more dear than they!

* * * * *

"And wider yet in thought and deed
Our still diverging paths incline,
Thine the Genevan's sternest creed,
While answers to my spirit's need
The Yorkshire peasant's simple line;
For thee the priestly rite and prayer,
And holy day and solemn psalm;
For me the silent reverence, where
My brethren gather, slow and calm."

Whittier has the soul of a great poet, and we should not be surprised if he attained the height of excellence in his art. The faults of his mind, springing from excessive fluency and a too excitable sensibility, exaggerated as they have been by the necessities of hasty composition, have prevented him from displaying as yet the full power of his genius. It is by no means unlikely, that, when he has somewhat tamed the impetuosity of his feelings, and brooded with more quiet intensity over the large stores of poetry which lie chaotically in his nature, he may yet produce a work which will rival, and perhaps excel, the creations of his most distinguished contemporaries. He has that vigor, truthfulness, and manliness of character, — that freedom from conventional shackles, — that careless disregard of Mr. Prettyman's notion as to what constitutes the high, and Miss Betty's notion as to what constitutes the low, — that native energy and independence of nature, — which form the basis of the character of every great genius, and without which poetry is apt to be a mere echo of the drawing-room, and to idealize affectations instead of realities.

We are glad to perceive that Mr. Griswold has done some justice to the poetical powers of Mrs. Maria Brooks, author of "Zóphiël, or the Bride of Seven."

This lady has generally written under the name of Maria del Occidente. Her poems evince mental qualities, which, if they had been employed on themes or incidents more in accordance with popular feeling than those she has chosen, would have given her the first place among American poets of her own sex. Her mind has a wider sweep, and is more poetical in its tendencies, than that of any of her female contemporaries. In fancy and passion, she has hardly been excelled by any American writer. Her mind is stored with knowledge, her sense of harmony is exceedingly fine, and her command of language is almost despotic. She possesses great fertility of fancy, and a luxurious sense of the beauty of outward objects. Nature to her is "an appetite and a passion." In the description of tropical scenery, there is a delicious richness, a dreamy beauty, and a "mazy-running soul of harmony" in her verse, which not only bring the scene vividly to the eye, but render it perceptible to the other senses. She has great warmth and occasional intensity of feeling, and gives it free and bold expression. Her poem of "Zóphiël," first published in London, in 1833, is a remarkable production. It has been much praised in England, but seems to be little known in this country; and by many it is still considered the work of an Englishwoman. When republished in Boston, it was hailed by most of the critics with admiring ignorance or pert stupidity. Some were astonished to find a woman of the nineteenth century evincing more knowledge of Plato and Hafiz than of Bulwer or Hannah More; others were shocked, that she should so far wander from the "legitimate sphere" of female composition as to attempt something more than the versification of sermons, or the vivification of com-

monplaces. Though the subject is, on the whole, delicately treated, there are a few stanzas which might have been omitted with advantage to the general refinement of expression. These were darted upon by persons endowed with a sharp scent for indelicacy, and represented, with certain mysterious nods, winks, and the other signs of prudery's freemasonry, as samples of the poem; and, accordingly, the most unjustly neglected work of genius ever published in the United States came near obtaining the dubious honor of circulating over the whole land as a book "which no young lady should read." We think that Mr. Griswold's selections from "Zóphiël," although they cannot give a full impression of its merits, prove that it contains poetical qualities which would reflect no discredit upon poets of far greater popularity.

Mrs. E. Oakes Smith, of New York, has written a number of short poems of much beauty, purity, and spirituality. "The Sinless Child" and "The Acorn" manifest qualities of mind and heart which are worthy of a more thorough development. They display depth of feeling and affluence of fancy, and are singularly pure and sweet in their tone. "The Sinless Child," though deficient in artistical finish, contains many passages of a high order of poetry, and is stainless as its subject. It gives evidence, also, of a capacity for a more extended sweep over the domain of thought and emotion. Mrs. Smith is not merely a smooth and skilful versifier, indulging occasionally in a flirtation with poetry, to while away the time, but one whose productions are true exponents of her inward life, and display the freshness and fervor which come from individuality of character and feeling. She speaks of what she knows and of

what she has felt. Her theory of morals does not seem to have come into her soul through the inlet of the ear. Her truthfulness is a prominent characteristic of her genius.

The poems of Mrs. Sigourney are very numerous and popular. According to Mr. Griswold, she has published six or seven volumes, of which the last appeared in 1841. The moral character of her writings is unexceptionable. She possesses great facility in versification, and is fluent both in thoughts and language. But much that she has written is deformed by the triteness and irregularity consequent upon hasty composition, and hardly does justice to her real powers. "Niagara," "The Death of an Infant," "Winter," and "Napoleon's Epitaph," are favorable specimens of her talents.

Mrs. Child has written little verse, but the few metrical pieces which pass under her name are almost as good as her best prose. Hannah F. Gould is a name so pleasantly interwoven with pure fancies and good thoughts, that it is an unpleasant task to sift her productions, for the purpose of selecting those of enduring value. She is responsible for three volumes of verse, all of which have been read. Mrs. Amelia B. Welby, a young poetess of the west, has considerable force of expression, delicacy of fancy, and the poetic feeling in large measure. Mrs. Elizabeth Hall has acquired much reputation by her dramatic poem of "Miriam." Elizabeth F. Ellett, Anne Peyre Dinnies, (author of that noble expression of high feeling, "The Wife,") Emma C. Embury, Lucy Hooper, Lucretia and Margaret Davidson, receive the due honors of Mr. Griswold's pen and scissors. He makes numerous selections from the female poets.

We wish that we had space to do some justice to the quick, teeming fancy of Willis, a quality which he exercises in the service both of sentiment and humor. But we have noticed his poems at length in a former number of this journal, to which we must refer our readers for an estimate of his powers. Pierpont has displayed much lyrical enthusiasm and forcible expression, which are worthy of more than a passing tribute. Drake's delicate creation, "The Culprit Fay," and his stirring lyric on "The American Flag," deserve commemoration. Hillhouse has written much which will not be forgotten. "Hadad" is a chaste and beautiful production, evincing skill and taste in composition, and pure and melodious in its tone. The "sunset-tinted haziness" through which the fine humanity and suggestive imagination of Lowell are seen, would delay the course of any critic who was not in desperate haste. Mr. Griswold has hardly done him justice in the selections contained in this volume. There are many excellent thoughts and imaginations scattered over the compositions of Brainard, Pike, Dawes, Wilde, Ware, Wilcox, Neal, Peabody, Sands, Lunt, Clarke, and others in Mr. Griswold's collection, which if the reader cannot discover himself, he will be assisted in his search by the editor's kindly and genial notices. Had we room for extracts, we might select many pieces of merit from the writings of American poets of the second class; but time and space are particularly inexorable to reviewers, and we must pause.

We can hardly conceive that a reasonable being should look with coolness or dislike upon any efforts to establish a national literature, of which poetry is such an important element. The man whose heart is capable of any patriotic emotion, who feels his pulse quicken

when the idea of his country is brought home to him, must desire that country to possess a voice more majestic than the roar of party, and more potent than the whine of sects, — a voice which would breathe energy and awaken hope wherever its kindling tones were heard. The life of our native land, — the inner spirit which animates its institutions, — the new ideas and principles of which it is the representative, — these every patriot must wish to behold reflected from the broad mirror of a comprehensive and soul-animating literature. The true vitality of a nation is not seen in the triumphs of its industry, the extent of its conquests, or the reach of its empire; but in its intellectual dominion. Posterity passes over statistical tables of trade and population, to search for the records of the mind and heart. It is of little moment how many millions of men were included at any time under the name of one people, if they have left no intellectual testimonials of their mode and manner of existence, no "foot-prints on the sands of time." The heart refuses to glow at the most astounding array of figures. A nation lives only through its literature, and its mental life is immortal. The capricious tyranny of Dionysius might well inspire fear in those whose lives and fortunes were subject to his passions and whims; but it can exercise no control over us. It died with the feeble arm of him who wielded it. But the power of Plato passed not away with his corporeal frame. Homer still sings, Socrates still speaks to us. Greece yet lives in her literature, more real to our minds, nearer to our affections, than many European kingdoms. The true monarchs of a country are those whose sway is over thought and emotion. They are

"The dead but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule
Our spirits from their urns."

America abounds in the material of poetry. Its history, its scenery, the structure of its social life, the thoughts which pervade its political forms, the meaning which underlies its hot contests, are all capable of being exhibited in a poetical aspect. Carlyle, in speaking of the settlement of Plymouth by the Pilgrims, remarks that, if we had the open sense of the Greeks, we should have "found a poem here; one of nature's own poems, such as she writes in broad facts over great continents." If we have a literature, it should be a national literature; no feeble or sonorous echo of Germany or England, but essentially American in its tone and object. No matter how meritorious a composition may be, as long as any foreign nation can say that it has done the same thing better, so long shall we be spoken of with contempt, or in a spirit of impertinent patronage. We begin to sicken of the custom, now so common, of presenting even our best poems to the attention of foreigners with a deprecating, apologetic air; as if their acceptance of the offering, with a few soft and silky compliments, would be an act of kindness demanding our warmest acknowledgements. If the Quarterly Review or Blackwood's Magazine speaks well of an American production, we think that we can praise it ourselves, without incurring the reproach of bad taste. The folly we yearly practise, of flying into a passion with some inferior English writer, who caricatures our faults, and tells dull jokes about his tour through the land, has only the effect to exalt an insignificant scribbler into notoriety, and give a nominal value to his recorded impertinence. If the mind and heart of the country had its due expression, if its life

had taken form in a literature worthy of itself, we should pay little regard to the childish tattling of a pert coxcomb, who was discontented with our taverns, or the execrations of some bluff sea-captain, who was shocked with our manners. The uneasy sense we have of something in our national existence which has not yet been fitly expressed, gives poignancy to the least ridicule launched at faults and follies which lie on the superficies of our life. Every person feels that a book which condemns the country for its peculiarities of manners and customs does not pierce into the heart of the matter, and is essentially worthless. If Bishop Berkeley, when he visited Malebranche, had paid exclusive attention to the habitation, raiment, and manners of the man, and neglected the conversation of the metaphysican, and, when he returned to England, had entertained Pope, Swift, Gay, and Arbuthnot, with satirical descriptions of the "complement extern" of his eccentric host, he would have acted just as wisely as many an English tourist, with whose malicious pleasantry on our habits of chewing, spitting, and eating, we are silly enough to quarrel. To the United States, in reference to the pop-gun shots of foreign tourists, might be addressed the warning which Peter Plymley thundered against Bonaparte, in reference to the Anti-Jacobin jests of Canning: Tremble, oh thou land of many spitters and voters, "for a *pleasant* man has come out against thee, and thou shalt be laid low by a joker of jokes, and he shall talk his pleasant talk to thee, and thou shalt be no more!"

In order that America may take its due rank in the commonwealth of nations, a literature is needed which shall be the exponent of its higher life. We live in times of turbulence and change. There is a general

dissatisfaction, manifesting itself often in rude contests and ruder speech, with the gulf which separates principles from actions. Men are struggling to realize dim ideals of right and truth, and each failure adds to the desperate earnestness of their efforts. Beneath all the shrewdness and selfishness of the American character, there is a smouldering enthusiasm which flames out at the first touch of fire, — sometimes at the hot and hasty words of party, and sometimes at the bidding of great thoughts and unselfish principles. The heart of the nation is easily stirred to its depths; but those who rouse its fiery impulses into action are often men compounded of ignorance and wickedness, and wholly unfit to guide the passions which they are able to excite. There is no country in the world which has nobler ideas embodied in more worthless shapes. All our factions, fanaticisms, reforms, parties, creeds, ridiculous or dangerous though they often appear, are founded on some aspiration or reality which deserves a better form and expression. There is a mighty power in great speech. If the sources of what we call our fooleries and faults were rightly addressed, they would echo more majestic and kindling truths. We want a poetry which shall speak in clear, loud tones to the people; a poetry which shall make us more in love with our native land, by converting its ennobling scenery into the images of lofty thought; which shall give visible form and life to the abstract ideas of our written constitutions: which shall confer upon virtue all the strength of principle, and all the energy of passion; which shall disentangle freedom from cant and senseless hyperbole, and render it a thing of such loveliness and grandeur as to justify all self-sacrifice; which shall make us love man by the new

consecrations it sheds on his life and destiny; which shall force through the thin partitions of conventionalism and expediency; vindicate the majesty of reason; give new power to the voice of conscience, and new vitality to human affection; soften and elevate passion; guide enthusiasm in a right direction; and speak out in the high language of men to a nation of men.

TALFOURD.*

Among the many gifted minds who have been influenced by the spirit which Wordsworth infused into the literature of the present age, there is hardly one who approaches nearer, in the tone and character of his writings, to the bard of Rydal Mount, than Thomas Noon Talfourd, the poet and essayist. He belongs to that class of authors, who manifest so much purity and sweetness of disposition, that our admiration for their talents is often merged in our love for their qualities of heart. Criticism shrinks from a cold analysis of their powers. Wherever they find a reader, they find a friend. A spirit of affectionate partisanship mingles with most criticisms on their writings. All who have partaken of their intellectual companionship have a deep sympathy in their personal welfare. We may be almost said to joy in their joy, and grieve in their grief. If they be not bound to us by the ties of consanguinity, they are still the brethren of our minds and hearts. Oceans cannot separate them from our love. National differences cannot alienate them from our affections. Wherever they go, they have the "freedom of the city." Wordsworth, Lamb, Dickens, Talfourd, Frederika Bremer, allowing for their intellectual diversities, and the differ

* Critical and Miscellaneous Writings of T. Noon Talfourd, Author of "Ion." Philadelphia: Carey & Hart. 1842. 12mo. pp. 354. — *North American Review, October*, 1843.

ent influences which have modified their genius, are all authors who make personal friends wherever their writings penetrate.

In speaking of Talfourd as a mental pupil of Wordsworth, we do not mean to say that he is an imitator of his master's manner, or that he closely copies any of his prominent beauties or defects; but merely that the tone and aim of the writings of the two are similar. In the spirit and essence of his genius, and not in its outward form and expression, is he a Wordsworthian. He, indeed, often adopts expressions and images which Wordsworth, in the severe simplicity of his taste, would reject with disdain. His style is richly laden with ornament, and almost monotonously musical in its flow. His thoughts are more often seen in the imperial robes of rhetoric, than in its suit of "homely russet brown." The rich flush of imagination colors his whole diction. At times, he is fastidiously nice in his choice of language, and a fondness for dainty and delicate epithets too often gives to his style an appearance of prettiness. He luxuriates too much in the "nectared sweets" of language and imagery, and is apt to impair the manliness and vigor of his diction by redundant fancies and sugared words. When his own stores of sweetness fail him, he avails himself of those belonging to others. His diction is studded with apt quotations, teeming with richness of sentiment and style. But still he shares in all the essential characteristics of the school of Wordsworth, and gives evidence on every page of that "quiet eye which sleeps and broods on his own heart." The mingling spirits of meditation and imagination are the inspiration both of his poetry and criticism. His manner is almost always quiet, even when he is severe. There is

nothing in his general style to interrupt the calm and steady flow of his thoughts and feelings, — no glare, no rush, no epigrammatic point, no "agony" and "wreaking" of mind upon expression. His temper is kindly, and averse to any use of sarcasm and denunciation. There is even little evidence in his writings of that directness and dogmatism which sometimes spring from the untrammelled exercise of a sharp, clear intellect, seeing objects in the white light of reason. His logic is often held in bondage to his affections or associations, and accommodates itself to the wishes of his heart. He is apt to consider matters of reasoning and observation as though they were matters of taste. As a logician, he has many of those faults which poets who aspire to the honors of dialectics experience so much difficulty in avoiding. He would probably be a more pleasing writer, if his fine humanity were accompanied with greater strength of passion, or more grasp and independence of understanding.

The prose essays, the title of which we have chosen as a caption for our notice of Talfourd, abound in beauty. Indeed, the author's mind seems hardly to apprehend the mean and the deformed. His heart and imagination flow out in his compositions, and color and consecrate whatever they touch. It is difficult to resist their pleading tones, even when they appear as advocates for critical fallacies. The sophistry of their warm goodness is more pleasing than the logic of passionless reasoning. They seem to have been nurtured on the "selectest influences of creation," and to have been preserved from the "contagion of the world's slow stain." Love, beauty, goodness, sincerity, pure thoughts and fine sympathies, all in human character which is sweet and

gentle, seem to have sprung up in his nature as from celestial seed. An air of inexpressible purity is spread over his compositions. There is not one premeditated line, in his prose or verse, which can be associated with a base or immoral idea. It may be said of him with truth, that, although he has been the source of much pure delight to thousands, he has never made his talents ministers of evil, or sought popularity by pampering depraved tastes. Throughout his works we ever find beauty linked with goodness.

The reprints of what are called the "modern periodical essayists," including the present collection of the writings of Talfourd, naturally suggest a comparison between the periodical literature of the present age and that which existed in England during the latter half of the last century. No publisher, however enterprising, would hazard a republication of articles extracted from the old European and Gentleman's Magazines, and the Monthly Review. Indeed, until the establishment of the Edinburgh Review, in 1802, there were few, if any, periodicals worthy of comparison with the critical journals of the present day. Before that period, the regular monthly visiters to the fireside and the study were conducted by men of inferior abilities, and rarely contained articles worthy of preservation. Dulness answered to dulness, and weakness worshipped wit. On the publication of any work by an author of reputation, the reviewer tamely and timidly followed the footprints of his opinions and investigations, and rarely attempted more than a meek digest of both. No task can be more severe than to travel through the sterile tracts of periodical literature during the period we have indicated. The very appearance of an old magazine is suggestive of

insipidity and dulness. We can pick up little in it but the dry chips and shavings of thought and knowledge. Letters from country gentlemen about some subject in which none but country gentlemen can be supposed to take any interest, — communications from small antiquarians, on small antiquities, — a large number of metrical pieces which no country editor would now dare to publish in his poetical corner, — the ambitious struggle of the meanest mediocrity to look like moderate talent, — the coquetry of Mr. Robert Merry, the divine poet, with Miss Anna Matilda, the sad poetess, both hailing from Della Crusca, — an infinite number of little epistles on little subjects, devoid alike of forcible thought and vigorous expression, — everything, in short, but things of interest and excellence, composed the material of most periodicals during the last fifty years of the eighteenth century. The reviews, conducted for a short period by Gilbert Stuart and Dr. Smollett, were, by virtue of their rancor and malice, an exception to the stupidity of the mass. But flatness, insipidity, an absence of valuable information and mental vigor, a cringing and creeping deference to established codes of criticism, and a sickening weakness of expression, characterized most monthly journals during that period, when their contributors peopled the mansion-houses of fat-witted country squires, and the attics and cellars of Grub-street. How that unfortunate portion of our fellow-creatures known by the name of the "reading public" could not only purchase, but read, these stupid apologies for literature, is a mystery more puzzling than the debated authorship of Junius. It is impossible to discern the exact point in the descent of literature, when its productions will cease to command the money, and excite the attention, of the

simple and the well meaning. People in all times have their own peculiar methods of obtaining misery at a cheap rate. We buy ninepenny reprints of fashionable novels.

But the Edinburgh Review disturbed the smoothly stagnant waters of monthly and quarterly dulness. The tone of its early numbers was such as to make all disciples of stupidity, and all professors of bathos, fear and tremble. It was radical, revolutionary, almost piratical, in its warfare against existing abuses. It had the hardihood to consider folly, affectation, and undue pretensions, as crimes deserving of severe punishment. Its principal writers were men of clear intellect, with a fine perception of the ludicrous, a large command of the language of persiflage, and a singular union of the sharp, fleering tone of literary coxcombs, with the accomplishments of scholars and men of taste. They were distinguished for subtlety, rather than amplitude of comprehension; and were better fitted to discern with delicate tact the faults and absurdities of hacks and pedants, than to detect, appreciate, and foster the writings of great, but undisciplined, genius. They battled as fiercely against Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Lamb, and Montgomery, as they did against the poor poetasters and literary fops and hirelings, whose names it would be almost a disgrace to remember. The success of their first efforts against book-makers, and the favor with which their lively and malicious pleasantry was received by the public, appear to have impressed them with a magnified idea of their own importance and powers. They constituted themselves, with a quiet assurance almost unparalleled in literary history, the judges of the whole realm of letters; stated and abandoned their own laws of criticism at

pleasure; considered the publication of a book as *primâ facie* evidence of crime, of which only great merit could be received in apology; summoned every writer to their tribunal, and dealt out to him eulogy or blame, as their tastes, whims, wit, or politics, might prompt; were often intolerant and harsh in their judgments, where the victim could bring strong recommendations to mercy; and, by the mingled force of talent and assurance, they contrived for a series of years, and in a time affluent in great names, to exercise a predominant influence upon public opinion, and to give the tone to public taste. Grub-street fought desperately at first, to regain its old dominion; but it soon fell, "pierced through and through with cunning words," and was buried beneath the weight of its own explanatory, defamatory, and lugubrious pamphlets, — forty of which, excited by articles in the Edinburgh, and accusing it of all modes and shows of literary injustice, dropped drearily from the press in one year.

The success which attended the great Quarterly gave a strong impulse to periodical literature. Magazines and reviews multiplied rapidly. Almost all the talent of Great Britain found its way occasionally into their pages. Each of the great political and religious parties had its code of criticism, its rank and file of periodical essayists, its representatives of party principles and party literature. Each journal attempted to surpass its contemporaries in vigor, brilliancy and point. A certain fierceness of tone was infused into criticism. No writer, however high his genius, or noble his motives, could publish a book, without suffering insult and injustice from some one of these flashing and bitter exponents of *cliques* and parties.

We have intimated our high opinion of the value of the essays and disquisitions with which British periodi-

cal literature is now so amply filled. An eminent publishing house in Philadelphia has very wisely undertaken to reprint these, and to give them a general circulation in the United States. To this enterprise we owe the collection of Talfourd's prose writings, — gems which were originally set in the Retrospective Review and New Monthly Magazine, but which did not attract, in that form, perhaps from the very fineness of their workmanship, the attention they deserved. They bear in almost every sentence marks of care and labor, and are distinguished from the compositions of contemporary essayists, not only by peculiarities of temperament and opinion, but by the sedate beauty and calmness of their tone. We can perceive in them none of that deliberate fury, that spasmodic and convulsed energy, that incessant struggle after brilliancy, which characterize the style of most writers for the English magazines. They do not appear to be the productions of haste, prejudice, or whim, but seem to have been carefully meditated in those hours of the author's life which were peculiarly favorable to chasteness of thought and felicity of composition. Nothing appears in them calculated to suggest the hired hack, torturing his mind into something like vigor, inspired by a distant view of eight guineas a sheet.

His critical writings manifest on every page a sincere sympathy with intellectual excellence and moral beauty. The kindliness of temper, and tenderness of sentiment, by which they are animated, are continually suggesting pleasant thoughts of the author. He festoons the scalpel of the critic with roses. Hatred, scorn, and dogmatism, rarely vex the unruffled stream of his thoughts and emotions. A fine humanity pervades and harmonizes hi mind. But his sweetness of disposition in many cases

disturbs the clear action of his intellect. The critic, of all persons, should have a keen eye. His province is to see, more, perhaps, than it is to feel. If the clearness of his vision is dimmed by discipleship or enmity, or if the object that he examines be discolored by the hues of his own mind, he gives us a fancy picture, not a portrait, he adds or takes away from the original until its real features are lost. In Talfourd's critiques, we discover much which can hardly be called critical. The judge is too apt to lose himself in the advocate or disciple. To use his own words, in speaking of Hazlitt, he sometimes confounds the processes of argument with those of feeling. He is more often at the feet of Gamaliel than in the judgment-seat. He bends his knee in reverent homage to the great and the good. The splendid notices of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, and Mackenzie, are rapturous hymns in praise of those authors, rather than close, analytical judgments of their merits. Talfourd has none of that dogmatism of feeling which impels Macaulay to exalt himself above his subject, and remorselessly analyze and dissect even his favorite authors; neither does he, like the same critic, take some writers captives of his criticism, and exhibit their scalps in proof of his prowess. All warfare against poets or prose writers, whether conducted on Indian or civilized principles, he steadily eschews. He becomes sternly critical only when he applies the principles educed from the works of his favorite authors to writings which are formed on a different system, or which spring from a different moral or mental source; and then he is frequently partial and one-sided in his view. He describes the genius of a poet, not as it is in reality, but as it has affected his own imagination and sympathies; and he

consequently pours out in the praise of a cherished author the whole wealth of suggestive thought which belongs to his own mind. He thus gives the object of his eulogy credit for all the ideas and imaginations which he has awakened, as well as for all which he has directly imparted. By this method, we have an abstract and expression of two minds, not of one, — as in the Dialogues reported by Plato, where the disciple adds to the teachings of the master, without claiming his share of the joint product.

The prominent characteristic of Talfourd's critical system is his view of the nature and sphere of imagination, stated with considerable definiteness in his articles on Maturin, Wordsworth, and Hazlitt, and influencing his judgment in others. This theory essentially modifies his opinion of books and men, and, though beautiful in itself, appears to lie open to weighty objections. It is a curious fact, and one which well illustrates the influence of the spirit of discipleship, that Talfourd narrows the domain of imagination within the sphere of Wordsworth's genius. His definition of the faculty is as follows. — "In our sense, it is that power by which the spiritualities of our nature, and the sensible images derived from the material universe, are commingled at the will of the possessor. It has thus a two-fold operation, — the bodying forth of feelings, sentiments, and ideas, in beautiful and majestic forms, and giving to them local habitations; and the informing the colors and shapes of matter with the properties of the soul."

This definition we conceive to be narrow. It does not cover the whole extent of the power. It restricts the operation of the faculty to the capacity of discerning, suggesting, and commingling analogies. Is this the

whole of its province? Are not the creation of individual characters, and the invention of incident, among its legitimate efforts? The conception and creation of the characters of Lear and Macbeth seem to us as noble efforts of the imagination, as the commingling of the spiritualities of their natures with the sensible images derived from the material universe. To apply the *argumentum ad hominem*, we might ask, is not the creation of the character of Ion, out of the finest elements of humanity, as grand and beautiful an operation of the "faculty divine" as any of the images in which his thoughts and sentiments take shape and hue? But Wordsworth is deficient in the power of creating character and incidents. His genius is intensely subjective and egotistical. He pours his personal feelings into everything he writes. He makes nature and man speak in his peculiar dialect. A theory must, therefore, be invented, by which the poetic power of Wordsworth shall be made the measure of the poetic power itself; and this Talfourd has done, with a seeming unconsciousness of sophistry which it is beautiful to see.

There is still another objection to be made to Talfourd's critical canons. Connected with his theory of the scope of the imagination, he has another, relating to its operation as the reconciling and harmonizing principle of the mind. He also gives to its analogies more authority than belongs to the deductions of the understanding. In his system, imagination sees truth in clear vision. Like figures, it cannot lie. All the other mental faculties are liable to delude us; but this divine power, if it exist at all, must ever picture forth what is real and true. It discerns the eternal substance, not the "shows and shams," of things. "A mirror can no more reflect an

object which is not before it, than the imagination can show the false and the baseless." Our author, indeed, gives it all the intuitive power which Cousin confers on the "spontaneous reason." We are gravely told, that the faculty is never irregular, confused, dim, or unreal, in any of its manifestations; that gaudiness of diction, excess of metaphor, turbulence, and a number of other qualities, which many good people conceive to spring from the predominance of the poetic faculty, do not arise from an *ill-regulated* imagination, for such a term is altogether inapplicable to the power, but rather from excessive sensibility and verbal fluency. He is certainly correct in distinguishing false from true imagination, and vindicating the faculty from many of the tasteless enormities which have passed for its creations; but in his zeal he forgets facts, and abandons logic. From his statement, it would seem that no one can imagine what does not exist; that we are never fooled by fantasy; and that Hamlet grossly libelled the power, when he hinted the possibility that his imaginations might be as foul as Vulcan's stithy. Besides, our author, in his other essays, is not altogether faithful to his own principles. We can occasionally detect expressions and illustrations which are logically inconsistent with his cherished notion. His admiration, at times, will burst out, in spite of his theory, in praise of imagination when it is distempered, or shadows forth unreal mockeries.

The notion that the imagination acts as the harmonizing principle of the mind, we conceive to be fallacious. The general suffrage would be in favor of a directly opposite opinion. Besides, it does not follow from Talfourd's definition of the faculty, and it is likewise contradicted by facts. It is merely an assumption. The

method of reasoning which the author followed in arriving at this singular conclusion was probably something like this: — Wordsworth must be placed above all the other poets of the age. The mind of Wordsworth, as developed in his writings, is harmonious. It rarely seems stung and stirred into action by passion and impulse; it is cool and philosophic. Therefore the imagination, which above all others is the faculty of the poet, must act as the reconciling principle of the soul, and be the source of its harmony.

We cannot see any necessary connection at all between the power of commingling at will the "spiritualities of our nature" with sensible images, and a harmonized state of the whole inward nature. Among Wordsworth's contemporaries, Shelley and Byron are examples at once of great imaginations and unsettled minds. They possessed, in a high degree, the power of "informing the colors and shapes of matter with the properties of the soul," and "of bodying forth ideas, feelings, and sentiments, in beautiful and majestic forms;" and whether these ideas, feelings, and sentiments, were pernicious or good, false or true, the forms in which they were embodied were still beautiful and majestic.

> "For they knew
> How to make madness beautiful; and threw
> O'er erring thoughts and deeds a heavenly hue
> Of words, like sunbeams, dazzling, as they past,
> The eyes which o'er them shed tears feelingly and fast."

The "heavenly hue" of all language comes from imagination, and cannot be caught from the lexicon; and the fact that this has been thrown over madness, error, lust, and intemperance, is too notorious to admit of doubt. From a single page of Shelley's writings there

can be selected as many examples of the true power of imagination, as defined by Talfourd, as animate, we had almost said, a whole book of "The Excursion;" and it is equally true, that the images themselves are as likely to be the embodiment of restlessness, discontent, pantheistic abstractions, and other "spiritualities" of our nature, as ideas, feelings, and sentiments springing from a harmonized heart and brain. Indeed, the illustrations from Shakspeare, which, in the essay on Wordsworth, Talfourd adduces as instances of the highest exercise of the faculty, are nothing more than the throes of the imagination in a mind either turbulently confused, or fixedly and sullenly misanthropic, — as with Lear in his ecstasies of passion, or Timon in his intensest hatred of his kind. And it is a curious fact, that, in the composition of these dramas, Shakspeare himself was expressing, to some extent, the gloom of his own great soul, when it was in a condition altogether inharmonious and *un-Wordsworthian*. Hallam very acutely remarks, "There seems to have been a period of Shakspeare's life when his heart was ill at ease and ill-content with the world or his own conscience; the memory of hours misspent, the pang of affection misplaced or unrequited, the experience of man's worser nature, which intercourse with ill-chosen associates, by choice or circumstances, peculiarly teaches; these, as they sunk down into the depths of his great mind, seem not only to have inspired into it the conception of Lear and Timon, but that of one primary character, the censurer of mankind." He then proves that the plays in which this misanthropical spirit is manifested, "As You Like It," "Hamlet," "Measure for Measure," "Timon," and "Lear," all belong to one period, — between 1600 and 1604. After this time, "Shakspeare

never returned to this type of character in the personages."

It can hardly be denied that Wordsworth possesses the power of imagination in a high degree; but it can be denied that the seeming harmonious action of his mind results from his possession of it. Talfourd, in another connection, has a sentence, which, to us, seems to explain the whole matter. Speaking of Mackenzie's sentimental style, he observes: "Its consecrations are altogether drawn from the soul. The gentle tinges which it casts on human life are shed, not from the imagination or fancy, but from the affections." This is true of much that is poetical in Wordsworth. His mind, by original constitution and the circumstances attending its culture, — from the predominance of the gentler affections over the passions, and of the musing and meditative over the impulsive portion of his nature, — is less unrestful and stormy than the minds of the large majority of great poets. But whether it be more richly gifted with a shaping imagination, is altogether a different question, with which the rounded harmony of his powers and affections has little to do. Indeed, to give imagination the office not only of expressing thought and feeling in pictures and characters, but of exercising likewise all those functions which belong to volition, conscience, the affections, and the religious sentiment, is to violate all metaphysical propriety.

To assert that the imagination can never reflect the unreal, or be the spring of any "irregularities of genius," — can never throw a deceptive hue over outward objects, and lead the mind astray, — can never pander to lust and "link vice to a radiant angel," — is to give the lie direct to the "Lives of the Poets." The imagination

can, it is true, embody truth and goodness in the shapes and hues of grandeur and beauty; but it can do, and it has done, the same to licentiousness, scepticism, and misanthropy. This is generally called imagination perverted; but in Talfourd's system, the faculty is essentially incapable of perversion. If the poetic faculty had always been employed in the service of truth and goodness, — if, by its very nature, it were pure, and beyond the touch and stain of bad passions, — if all its creations were unsullied by sin, — the objections which many good and respectable, but somewhat narrow-minded, people entertain for what are called works of the imagination, would be the most senseless prejudices ever held by human beings.

We have considered Talfourd's views on this subject at some length, because they materially influence the character of his criticisms, especially upon the impulsive poets of the school of Byron and Shelley. He is not, it must be confessed, always consistent in the application of his principles; but they are still obstinately obtruded upon the reader's attention, and arouse at last that nervous opposition, which a smooth and pleasant sophism, pranked out in the purple and fine linen of language, would at first fail to excite. We also object to his theory on another ground. It is the parent of much cant, which is growing into fashion among many of our own writers, about the inherent religion of poetry. Every young bard who stains foolscap with octo-syllabic or seven-syllabled verse, squeaking with "utterances" and "morning glories," is in danger of conceiving himself, by virtue of his imagination, "a sinless child;" and in men of a higher order of mind, it is working a graver evil, by inducing them to exalt poetry above the Bible, — to deny

altogether the inspiration of the New Testament, even in its sublime promises, and to believe altogether in the inspiration of Shakspeare, even in his puns and indecencies.

As far as our author's criticisms are influenced by his championship of Wordsworth, they are at least able and eloquent. His opinions appear formed from a long-continued brooding over the works on which he dilates. The essay on the writings of Wordsworth is one of the most beautiful tributes of admiring gratitude ever paid to genius; and, although excessive in the strain of its eulogy, and containing some questionable principles of taste, cannot be read without delight, even by poetical sectarians. The finest passage is that in which he vindicates his master from the charge of displaying bad taste, both in the choice of his themes and in his rejection of the usual blandishments of diction.

"But most of the subjects of Mr. Wordsworth, though not arrayed in any adventitious pomp, have a real and innate grandeur. True it is, that he moves not among the regalities, but among the humanities, of his art. True it is, that his poetry does not 'make its bed and procreant cradle' in the jutting frieze, cornice, or architrave of the glorious edifices of human power. The universe in its naked majesty, and man in the plain dignity of his nature, are his favorite themes. And is there no might, no glory, no sanctity, in these? Earth has her own venerablenesses, — her awful forests, which have darkened her hills for ages with tremendous gloom; her mysterious springs, pouring out everlasting waters from unsearchable recesses; her wrecks of elemental contests; her jagged rocks, monumental of an earlier world. The lowliest of her beauties has an antiquity beyond that of the pyramids. The evening breeze has the old sweetness which it shed over the fields of Canaan, when Isaac went out to meditate. The Nile swells with its rich waters towards the bulrushes of Egypt, as when

the infant Moses nestled among them, watched by the sisterly love of Miriam. Zion's hill has not passed away with its temple, nor lost its sanctity amidst the tumultuous changes around it, nor even by the accomplishment of that awful religion of types and symbols, which once was enthroned on its steeps. The sun to which the poet turns his eye is the same which shone over Thermopylæ; and the wind to which he listens swept over Salamis, and scattered the armaments of Xerxes." —p. 129.

The essay on the genius of Scott is discriminating and well written. Indeed, there is hardly one among the twenty-three essays and reviews which form the Philadelphia collection of Talfourd's writings, which will not repay a careful perusal. If they do not belong to the stimulative class of compositions, neither can they be ranked among the narcotics. Perhaps the term "sedative" would describe them best. The richness of the author's mind and heart is lavished upon all. A fine detecting sense of moral and intellectual beauty, — a sensibility both quick and deep, — an imagination affluent in images of grace and loveliness, — a perfect command of ornate and picturesque language, — are manifested in his treatment of every subject; and his occasional fallacies seem to spring from a desire to vindicate those mental qualities intended for the service of goodness and virtue from the obloquy of having ever thrown a false glare around error and crime. In his notices of those poets who have met his moral wants and natural sympathies; who have been for years the cherished companions of his heart, and given voice and shape to his affections and feelings; who have surrounded his path with forms of beauty and grace, and nursed all the tendencies of his nature to pensive musing with gentle and

holy thoughts and emotions; who have become, in short, part and parcel of himself, and melted into his own being, — Talfourd is almost always a worshipper rather than a critic, but a worshipper equalling in eloquence the idol to which he bends. His description of a writer's power is so warm and kindling, and he claims for him such high qualities, that we are apt to meet with disappointment when we turn to the object of his eulogy, to verify the panegyric; and we often feel a sense of shame come over us, that ideas and images which can awaken in his nature such vivid perceptions of loveliness, power, and grandeur, should often fall into our own

> "Like snow-flakes on a river,
> One moment white, then gone forever."

Talfourd's sympathy sharpens his intellectual acuteness. The most recondite gleam of beauty in thought, or felicity in expression, he detects with a delicacy and discrimination which none but a poet could employ. His mind darts, with the speed of instinct, to the apprehension of the most subtle idea or allusion which reaches his imagination through his heart. He is almost an epicurean in his appreciation of some classes of poetry. He absolutely feeds on tenderness of sentiment and intellectual beauty. To all writers of the tempestuous school, who come to him with heart-shattering miseries, riotous and noisy in turgid epithets, and demanding the sympathy and commiseration of the whole universe, he seems to exclaim, "Disturb not my peace with your wailings; my balm can assuage none of your pains; you have no imagination, but only a tyrannous sensibility, and a fatal fluency of language;" but to those who come to him with more harmony of tongue and motion,

who are at once "meek and bold," and who make no unnecessary parade of metaphor and sinfulness, he adopts a different strain of remark, and gives them a home in the inmost sanctuaries of his heart.

The work on which Talfourd has expended the full wealth of his genius is the tragedy of "Ion." Schlegel says, in his observations on Lear, "Of the heavenly beauty of Cordelia, I do not dare to speak." A moral fear of a similar nature should come over the heart of every critic who attempts to "break into parts for separate contemplation" this exquisite creation of our author's mind. A person who reads it in an earnest, sympathizing spirit, and allows the full stream of its harmony to flow at once into his heart, conscience, and imagination, is in little danger of exaggerating its excellence by hyperbolical panegyric. The fine humanity which breathes through it touches the finest chords of the moral nature. Its ideal of greatness and virtue is the same which Christ taught and realized. It teaches that gentleness is power, and self-sacrifice the noblest ambition. The flow of the verse, the exquisite nicety of the language, the picturesque beauty of the imagery, the holiness and elevation of the thoughts, the delicious purity and sweetness of the tone of the composition, and the rare spiritual harmony with which it is pervaded, entitle it to a very high rank among the great poems which no age will willingly let die. The character of Ion is the embodiment of moral beauty. It could have risen from the depths of no soul but one of singular purity and loveliness. It is one of those "things of beauty" which become "a joy forever." It "floats like a lily on the river of our thoughts." Any objections to the work which criticism may raise cannot break one

ink in that golden chain by which it is bound to our deepest sympathies and highest imaginations.

Talfourd is the author of two other tragedies, which have less merit and celebrity than "Ion" — "The Athenian Captive," and "Glencoe." Both are well written, and if produced by any other man than the author of "Ion," would be justly esteemed as evincing considerable dramatic power, force of thought, and fineness as well as strength of imagination. But their intrinsic excellence is underrated from their being tried by the standard which their elder brother established. "Glencoe," in particular, is a noble drama, replete with grandeur and beauty of sentiment and expression, and displaying much skill in the delineation of character.

The exuberance of imagination and sensibility which Talfourd manifests in all his compositions, seems to indicate that his true vocation is poetry. In kindly feeling, in genial sympathy with his race, in that running over of the heart in the worship of all that is great and good in character and life, in all those qualities which mark the musing and imaginative poet, he is perhaps not excelled by any contemporary. Still, with a nature which seems so singularly fitted for the quiet pursuits of literature, his life thus far must have been somewhat practical. He is a distinguished lawyer and politician. His literary productions have been conceived and executed in the pauses of active professional business. He is one of those authors against whom we never bring the complaint of having written too much. Indeed, we wish that he would abandon other avocations, and devote himself wholly to letters. This wish, as generally applied, we know is nothing more than a sickening expression of mawkishness and hypocrisy; but in the case of

Talfourd, it springs directly from the heart of every reader who has drawn delight and mental nourishment from his writings. We rather grudge the hours which poets of his class devote to more worldly duties. We imagine we have a moral claim upon their souls, and hardly acknowledge their right to give their powers any other direction than what seems at once to be their natural tendency, and to minister to our highest pleasures. If, however, our author should not add one line to what he has already written, his name is sure to be warmly cherished by those to whom his works have been pleasant and profitable companions, with familiar faces ever beaming with benignity and sinlessness; whose love of moral and intellectual excellence he has kindled or elevated; and who can pardon an occasional paradox or fallacy, when it springs from a desire to vindicate the intrinsic nobleness of the poet's vocation, and is associated with such high moral principle, and so many valuable and soul-animating truths.

WORDS.*

Words, we are told, are the signs of ideas. This definition, at best, is faulty, and, in a majority of cases, untrue. Nothing is more common than to see words without any sign of ideas at all. Besides, those who understand the nature of language, and wield uncontrolled dominion over all its powers, have been careful to tell us that the true use of words is not to express, but to conceal, ideas. Words, moreover, are of such inherent value in themselves, and in the concerns of the world exercise such untrammelled influence, that it is unjust to degrade them from sovereigns into representatives. It would be much more modest for lovers of definition to say, not that words *are*, but that they *should* be, the signs of ideas. The moralist is more philosophical. He distinguishes carefully between qualities and their application. He defines the laws of ethics, and informs us that men should obey them, — not that they do.

The true ruler of this big, bouncing world is the Lexicon. Every new word added to its accumulated thousands is a new element of servitude to mankind. We should therefore look sharply at all axioms which seem to fix the signification of these little substantives and sovereigns. The notion that they are the signs of thought can be disposed of without any train of tedious

* American Review, February, 1845.

argument; because the originators and defenders of that notion are found inconsistent, when we unite any two of their propositions. For instance, the remark is often heard, that certain words in certain connections are "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Now, if words be full of sound, they must necessarily be sound words; and if words are the signs of ideas, sound words must represent sound thoughts. Here is a logical dilemma for these axiomatic gentlemen.

Indeed, words, in themselves, are nothing more than "mouthfuls of spoken wind," the sons and daughters of the tongue and lungs. They are hardened into consistency by a process of pens, ink, and paper. In this state they take form. But naturally they are immaterial substances, like thoughts. The sculptor embodies an idea in marble, and we discriminate between the essence and the form. Why should we not also distinguish between a word printed or written, and a word spoken or conceived, — between the body and the soul of an expulsion of air? Words, in truth, are entities, real existences, immortal beings; and, though I would not go the whole length of Hazlitt, in saying that they are the only things that live forever, I would vindicate their title to a claim in the eternities of this world, and defend them from the cavils of presumption and ignorance.

Shakspeare, speaking through Lorenzo, regrets, with much feeling, the thickness of ear which prevents us from drinking in the music of the spheres. But how much more, in a moral and intellectual point of view, should we lament that hard condition of our faculty of hearing, by which we are prevented from enjoying all the sweet noises of the past, and compelled to hear only the harsh gutturals of the present. Every disturbance

of the atmosphere, caused by the ejection of a word, does not cease with our perception of it, but is everlastingly active. All around us now are the words of Noah, and Moses, and Plato, and Socrates, and Shakspeare, and Milton; and if our ears were only delicate enough to convey the sounds into our minds, we might hear, with our outward organ, Plato converse on the soul's immortality, Socrates gravel a sophist with his interrogative logic, Shakspeare sting Ben Jonson or Master Decker with a joke worthy of Thersites, and Milton ask Quaker Ellwood to read Homer to him, or rebuke his daughters for unkindness and inattention. The air is a more faithful chronicler of words than books. Every whisper of wickedness which has fallen from the white lips of a tyrant or murderer, and which has never passed into but one human heart, is still alive in the air, and circling the earth in company with the song of Miriam, and the invectives of Luther, and the low prayer of Ridley, and the scoff of D'Holbach, and the profaneness of Rochester, and the denunciations of Burke. Truly are we surrounded with Voices. The sacredness and awful responsibilities of speech, — the latent importance of idle words, — consist in their ever-present existence. No sound that goes from the lip into the air can ever die, even in a sensual sense, until the atmosphere which wraps our planet in its huge embrace has passed into nothingness. Words, then, have a being of their own; they exist after death, or rather they continue to exist after all memory of them has departed from the minds into which they originally entered.

Leaving, however, these lofty notions of words, and coming down to the every-day world of books and men, we observe many queer developments of the cozenage of

language. The most fluent men seem the most influential. All classes seem to depend upon words. Principles are nothing in comparison with speech. A politician is accused of corruption, inconsistency, and loving number one more than number ten thousand. Straightway he floods the country with words, and is honorably acquitted. A gentleman of far-reaching and purse-reaching intelligence concocts twenty millions of pills, and "works" them off to agents, and, in the end, transfers the whole from his laboratory to the stomachs of an injured and oppressed people, by means of — words. Miss A. stabs the spotless name of Mrs. P. with a word-stiletto. The poisonous breath of a venomous fanatic moulds itself into syllables, and lo! a sect of Christians is struck with leprosy. An author wishes to be sublime, but has no fire in him, to give sparkle and heat to his compositions. His ideas are milk-and-water-logged, feeble, commonplace, nerveless, witless, and soulless; or his thoughts are ballasted with lead instead of being winged with inspiration. "What shall I do?" he cries, in the most plaintive terms of aspiring stupidity. Poor poetaster! do not despair! take to thy dictionary, — drench thy thin blood with gin, — learn the power of words. Pile the Ossa of Rant on the Pelion of Hyperbole, and thy small fraction of the Trite shall be exalted to the heights of the Sublime, and the admiring gaze of many people shall be fixed upon it, and the coin shall jingle in thy pocket, and thou shalt be denominated Great! But if thy poor pate be incapable of the daring, even in expression, then grope dubiously in the dismal swamps of verbiage, and let thy mind's fingers feel after spungy and dropsical words, out of which little sense can be squeezed, and arrange the oozy epithets and

insubstantial substantives into lines, and out of the very depths of Bathos thou shalt arise a sort of mud-Venus, and men shall mistake thee for her that rose from the sea, and the coin shall still clink in thy fob, and thou shalt be called Beautiful! Such is the omnipotence of words! They can exalt the little; they can depress the high; a ponderous polysyllable will break the chain of an argument, or crack the pate of a thought, as a mace or a battle-axe could split the crown of a soldier in the elder time.

To cover a man with contempt or obloquy, it is only necessary to apply to him some catchword of theology or politics. Society will say, with the sagacious Polonius, that such a word is good or bad, and judge of the living noun by the character of verbal tin-pail that wit or malice has appended to its tail. A man or woman, who has had certain impertinent or degrading adjectives applied to his or her name, will feel their sting and rattle long after they have been proved false and malignant. "A person with a bad name is already half hanged," saith the old proverb.

Words are most effective when arranged in that order called style. The great secret of a good style, we are told, is to have proper words in proper places. To marshal one's verbal battalions in such order that they may bear at once on all quarters of a subject, is certainly a great art. This is done in different ways. Swift, Temple, Addison, Hume, Gibbon, Johnson, Burke, are all great generals in the discipline of their verbal armies, and the conduct of their paper wars. Each has a system of tactics of his own, and excels in the use of some particular weapon. The tread of Johnson's style is heavy and sonorous, resembling that of an elephant or a mail-

clad warrior. He is fond of levelling an obstacle by a polysyllabic battering-ram. Burke's words are continually practising the broad-sword exercise, and sweeping down adversaries with every stroke. Arbuthnot "plays his weapon like a tongue of flame." Addison draws up his light infantry in orderly array, and marches through sentence after sentence, without having his ranks disordered or his line broken. Luther is different. His words are "half-battle;" "his smiting, idiomatic phrases seem to cleave into the very secret of the matter." Gibbon's legions are heavily armed, and march with precision and dignity to the music of their own tramp. They are splendidly equipped; but a nice eye can discern a little rust beneath their fine apparel, and there are suttlers in his camp who lie, cog, and talk gross obscenity. Macaulay, brisk, lively, keen, and energetic, runs his thoughts rapidly through his sentence, and kicks out of the way every word which obstructs his passage. He reins in his steed only when he has reached his goal, and then does it with such celerity that he is nearly thrown backwards by the suddenness of his stoppage. Gifford's words are moss-troopers, that waylay innocent travellers and murder them for hire. Jeffrey is a fine "lance," with a sort of Arab swiftness in his movement, and runs an iron-clad horseman through the eye before he has had time to close his helmet. John Wilson's camp is a disorganized mass, who might do effectual service under better discipline, but who, under his lead, are suffered to carry on a rambling and predatory warfare, and disgrace their general by flagitious excesses. Sometimes they steal, sometimes swear, sometimes drink, and sometimes pray. Swift's words are porcupine's quills, which he throws

with unerring aim at whoever approaches his lair. All of Ebenezer Elliot's words are gifted with huge fists, to pommel and bruise. Chatham and Mirabeau throw hot shot into their opponents' magazines. Talfourd's forces are orderly and disciplined, and march to the music of the Dorian flute; those of Keats keep time to the tones of the pipe of Phœbus; and the hard, harsh-featured battalions of Maginn are always preceded by a brass band. Hallam's word-infantry can do much execution, when they are not in each other's way. Pope's phrases are either daggers or rapiers. Willis's words are often tipsy with the champagne of the fancy; but even when they reel and stagger, they keep the line of grace and beauty, and though scattered at first by a fierce onset from graver cohorts, soon reünite without wound or loss. John Neal's forces are multitudinous, and fire briskly at everything. They occupy all the provinces of letters, and are nearly useless from being spread over too much ground. Webster's words are thunderbolts, which sometimes miss the Titans at whom they are hurled, but always leave enduring marks when they strike. Hazlitt's verbal army is sometimes drunk and surly, sometimes foaming with passion, sometimes cool and malignant; but, drunk or sober, is ever dangerous to cope with. Some of Tom Moore's words are shining dirt, which he flings with excellent aim. This list might be indefinitely extended, and arranged with more regard to merit and chronology. My own words, in this connection, might be compared to a ragged, undisciplined militia, which could be easily routed by a charge of horse, and which are apt to fire into each other's faces.

There is a great amount of critical nonsense talked about style. One prim Aristarchus tells us that no

manner of expression is so good as that of Addison; another contends for Carlyle; and both would have words arrayed according to their own models, without regard to individual mental bias or idiosyncrasies. If style be good just in proportion as it enables an author to express his thoughts, it should be shackled by few general rules. Every style formed elaborately on any model, must be affected and strait-laced. Every imitator of Byron and Pope has been damned and forgotten. The nature of a man can only *squeak* out, when it is hampered by artificial environments. Some thoughts, in a cramped style, look like Venus improved by the addition of busk and bustle. The selection and arrangement of a writer's words should be as characteristic as his ideas and feelings. There is no model style. What is pleasing in the diction of one author disgusts us in a copyist. If a person admires a particular method of arranging words, that arrangement will occur naturally in his own diction, without malice aforethought. Some writers occasionally fall into the mode of expression adopted by others. This illustrates a similarity of disposition, and is not imitation. As a style, when it is natural, comes rather from the heart than the head, men of similar tastes and feelings will be likely to fall into a similar form of expression. Leigh Hunt's easy slipshod is pleasant enough to read, as his nature is easy and slipshod; but only think of Carlyle running into that way of writing! Sydney Smith, concise, brisk and brilliant, has a manner of composition which exactly corresponds to those qualities; but how would Lord Bacon look in Smith's sentences? How grandly the soul of Milton rolls and winds through the arches and labyrinths of his involved and magnificent diction, wak-

ng musical echoes at every new turn and variation of ts progress — but how could the thought of such a light rifler as Cibber travel through so glorious a maze, with- ut being lost or crushed in the journey? The plain, nanly language of John Locke could hardly be trans- ated into the terminology of Kant — would look out of lace in the rapid and sparkling movement of Cousin's eriods — and would appear mean in the cadences of Dugald Stewart. Every writer, therefore, is his own tandard. The law by which we judge of his sentences nust be deduced *from* his sentences. If we can dis- over what the man is, we know what his style ought to e. If it indicate his character, it is, relatively, good; f it contradict his character, though its cadences are aultless, it is still bad, and not to be endured. To con- lemn Carlyle and Macaulay because they do not run heir thoughts into the moulds of Addison or Burke, is quivalent to condemning a bear because he does not ligest stones like an ostrich, or a chicken because it oes on two legs instead of four. The alleged faults elong to organization. We may quarrel with a writer, f we please, for possessing a bad or tasteless nature, but ot with the style which takes from that nature its form nd movement.

It is singular that Macaulay and Carlyle, continually rotesting against affectation in the mode of expressing hought, should be themselves considered the high priests t the shrine of affectation. In truth, no writers are less pen to the charge. Their styles are exact mirrors of heir minds. Any other form of expression would, in hem, be gross affectation. When they change their dis- ositions and modes of thinking, and preserve their way

of writing, they will then be justly liable to rebuke, and be justly punished with neglect.

Words have generally been termed the dress of thought. We recollect of hearing a lecturer on elocution give a minute description of the manner in which this singular tailoring of ideas was effected. He appareled an abstract conception of the Intellect in stockings, shirt, trowsers, vest, coat and bright buttons, and showed us those closets and drawers in the brain's chamber where such articles of clothing were deposited. This notion of words being the dress of thought is indeed curious. Let us suppose a case. An Imagination rises from the soft bed of Ideality, on hearing the tinkle of Master Reason's or Master Volition's bell. Of course, it does not desire to appear before company in a state of nudity, and it accordingly trips lightly into the dressing-room of the Noddle, and overhauls the mind's wardrobe. Now, this wardrobe, in some heads, is scanty and poor; in others, overflowing with rich and costly apparel. At any rate, our Imagination slips on the most shining and flaring suit of clothes it can find, and then slides along a number of nerves into the lungs, and sails out of the mouth on a stream of sound, to delight the world with its presence. In the verbal wardrobe of Wordsworth there would be few rich garments; consequently, most of his thoughts or fancies would be compelled to appear in peasants' frocks or suits of "homely russet brown." All of Byron's ideas aspired to appear in regal splendor; and, as they were in the custom of crowding thick and fast into the dressing-room, there must have been some jostling and fighting among them, for the most costly and showy suits. Vice and Falsehood would crave fine apparel as well as Virtue and

Truth; and, in his case, they must often have succeeded in bullying the latter out of their rights and "tights." There are a class of authors who have rich garments, but no thoughts to put into them. The garments, however, please the eye of the multitude, and few discover that they are stuffed with brass instead of brains. Some poets have nothing but ragged clothes in their wardrobe, and their poor, shivering Ideas go sneaking about the alleys of letters, ashamed to be seen by their more richly-dressed relations. Others, though in tatters, have a certain quick impudence, like that of Robert Macaire, which enables them to bustle about among their betters, and seem genteel, though in rags. We sometimes observe thoughts in the prim coats and broad hats of Quakers; but they are not admitted to the "West End," — excepting, of course, "the West End of the Universe." Sir Charles Sedley was distinguished for writing poems of considerable impurity of idea and considerable purity of language. His biographer, therefore, is careful to inform us that though the sentiments of Sir Charles were as foul as those of Rochester, they were not so immodest, because they were arrayed in clean linen. Dryden's wardrobe, we are told, was like that of a Russian noble, — "all filth and diamonds, dirty linen, and inestimable sables." To such speculations and fancies as these are we led, when we acknowledge the truth of the maxim, that words are the dress of thought.

Words, however, even in the common meaning, are not, when used by a master-mind, the mere dress of thought. Such a definition degrades them below their sphere, and misconceives their importance. They are, as Wordsworth has happily said, the *incarnation* of thought. They bear the same relation to ideas, that the

body bears to the soul. Take the most beautiful and sincere poetry which has ever been written, and its charm is broken as soon as the words are disturbed or altered. If any expression can be employed except that which is used, the poet is a bungling rhetorician, and writes on the surface of his theme. A Thought embodied and *embrained* in fit words, walks the earth a living being. No part of its body can be stricken from it or injured, without disfiguring the beauty of its form, or spoiling the grace of its motion. Such Thoughts, perhaps, are few in number; but woe upon those tasteless critics who would meddle with those few, and dare to alter their organization, on the plea of improvement!

Words, in a few "eminent hands," are servile ministers; but generally, even in great writers, they are kings who rule, not subjects who obey. In some minds they obtain "sovereign sway and masterdom" over the whole domain of thought and emotion. This servitude to words often impairs the healthy action of a writer's mind. It is the parent of many fallacies and inconsistencies. For instance, a reasoner desires to argue closely and logically; a word often leads him astray into a sophism, or tempts him, by its winning looks, to slide into an episode. A critic wishes to analyze a book; but instead of analysis he wanders slyly into eulogy or denunciation; for certain words, which sprang up, like flowers or thistles, in his path, were too sweet or too sharp for him to avoid. To give point to a period, some writers will throw in a word which will stab innocence or mediocrity like a poniard; to make a sentence end harmoniously, others will *pad* it with words which are meaningless or out of place. In describing characters or scenery, the general custom is to employ language

which is beautiful or strong, rather than what is applicable. Nothing is rarer than the use of a word in its exact meaning. Amplitude of comprehension is a much finer phrase than good reasoning powers, and consequently every respectable thinker is made a Bacon; vivid imagination sounds better than moderate talent, and of course every rhyme-stringer is a Byron; miserable drivelling has a sharper edge than mediocre merit, and all commonplace writers are therefore to be fools or dunces. Lord Byron, in alluding to the supposed cause of Keats's death, said —

> "Strange that the soul, that very fiery particle,
> Should let itself be snuffed out by an article."

Hunt told him that Keats was not killed in this way. Byron promised to strike it out. But the smartness and the rhyme were temptations stronger than his conscience, and he allowed the couplet to remain.

It would be an easy matter to mention some words which have exercised greater influence, and swayed with more absolute power, than Alexander or Napoleon. Any one can pick up in a newspaper the sovereigns of our own country. A word often keeps its seat in the mind of a people, after the thought, to which originally it was nominally attached, has disappeared. Words head armies, overthrow dynasties, man ships, separate families, cozen cozeners, and steal hearts and purses. And if physiologists and metaphysicians are driven into a corner, and are compelled to give the real distinction between human beings and animals, they are almost sure to say it consists in the power of speech — in the capacity to frame, use, and multiply at discretion, these omnipotent "mouthfuls of spoken wind." Words — words — words!

JAMES'S NOVELS.*

The author of "Sartor Resartus," in a petition to the House of Commons, on the copyright question, signs himself "Thomas Carlyle, a Maker of Books." This phrase, which applies to Herr Teufelsdröckh only in a quaint sense, is applicable to Mr. G. P. R. James in its literal meaning. He is, indeed, no "maker" in the old significance of that term, for he creates nothing; but he is emphatically a literary mechanic. The organs of his brain are the tools of his trade. He manufactures novels, as other people manufacture shoes, shirts, and sheetings; he continually works up the same raw material into very nearly the same shapes. The success he has met with in his literary speculations should be chronicled in the Merchants' or Mechanics' Magazine. He is a most scientific expositor of the fact, that a man may be a maker of books without being a maker of thoughts; that he may be the reputed author of a hundred volumes, and flood the market with his literary wares, and yet have very few ideas and principles for his stock in trade. For the last ten years, he has been repeating his own repetitions, and echoing his own echoes. His first novel was a shot that went through

* The False Heir. By G. P. R. James, Esq., author of "Morley Ernstein," "Forest Days," &c. New-York: Harper & Brothers. Price one shilling. 1843. — *North American Review, April*, 1844.

the target, and he has ever since been assiduously firing through the hole. To protect his person from critical assault, he might pile up a bulwark of books many volumes thick and many feet high; yet the essence of all that he has written, if subjected to a refining process, might be compressed into a small space, and even then would hardly bear the test of time, and journey safely down to posterity. When we reflect upon the character and construction of his works, and apply to them certain searching tests, they dwindle quickly into very moderate dimensions. We find that the enormous helmet encloses only a small nut, that the nut is an amplified exponent of the kernel, and that the kernel itself is neither very rich nor very rare. As space has no limits, and as large portions of it are still unoccupied by tangible bodies, it seems not very philosophical to quarrel with any person who endeavors to fill up its wide chasms; yet, in the case of Mr. James, we grudge the portion of infinite space which his writings occupy, and dispute his right to pile up matter which is the type or symbol of so small an amount of spirit. We sigh for the old vacuum, and think, that though nature may have abhorred it in the days of Aristotle, her feelings must have changed since modern mediocrity has filled it with such weak apologies for substance and form.

Piron, standing before the hundred volumes of Voltaire, remarked, "This luggage is too heavy to go down to posterity." What would he have said, if he could have seen the hundred volumes published by Mr. James? We think of "The Vicar of Wakefield," which one can carry in his pocket; of Charles Lamb's delightful "Essays;" of the tragedy of "Ion;" and of many other small and precious gems, which time cannot dim; and when

we contrast these with Mr. James's voluminous mediocrity and diffusive commonplace, we obtain a new and vivid idea of the distinction between quantity and quality.

When a man has little or nothing to say, he should say it in the smallest space. He should not, at any rate, take up more room than suffices for a creative mind. He should not provoke hostility and petulance, by the effrontery of his demands upon time and patience. He should let us off with a few volumes, and gain our gratitude for his benevolence, if not our praise for his talents. But when we find him "multiplying himself among mankind," and looking out upon us from such a vast variety of points, — demanding our assent to the common notion that he is a great producer of thought and sentiment, — we are provoked into a desire to sift his pretensions to the bottom.

We would not be so unjust to the numerous readers of Mr. James, even to that unfortunate portion of them who consider him the legitimate successor of Scott, as to assert their ignorance of his faculty of reproduction. A dim reminiscence, similar to that on which Plato founds his doctrine of the soul's preëxistence, they must have had occasionally, while re-perusing an old novel in a new dress. A dull country gentleman was once seduced into an attempt to read "The Vicar of Wakefield." He journeyed through that exquisite book, seemingly at the rate of ten pages in an evening; but when he laid it down for the night, and carefully marked the place where he stopped, some impudent niece or nephew put the mark about eight pages back in the volume. Of course, many months elapsed before he arrived at the end. He was then asked how he was pleased with it. "O! he liked it very well, but he thought there was a

.ittle repetition in it!" An objection somewhat similar to this we have heard made against Mr. James, and with about as clear an insight into the real secret of the matter.

To write a good novel, or a series of good novels, is not generally considered, even by those whose whole reading is confined to romance, to require any great effort of talent or genius. A man who repeats some axioms in physics, or wraps up a plain fact in a metaphysical shroud, is more likely to be considered as a great personage, than a writer of creative mind, who thrills the heart, or warms the imagination, with a prose epic. The products of the inventive powers rarely obtain so much of the popular reverence as the deductions of the understanding. Works which have caused their authors vast labor and patient meditation; which have stimulated every faculty of their nature to the utmost, which may have required, not only the highest imagination, but the deepest and most comprehensive thought; and which are pervaded, it may be, by the results of a whole life of feeling, action, observation, and reflection; are still generally classed as "light reading." It may be light *reading*, but nothing is more certain than that it is not commonly light *writing*. The novel of "Ivanhoe" may be placed by some in the department of light literature. But if those who coolly classify in this manner would but reflect upon the vast and minute knowledge of English history it displays, the power of intellect evinced in the conduct of the story, and the greater power of imagination exercised in making the dead past a living present; and, especially, if they would bring to mind the author, as he appeared while the scene between Rebecca and the Knight Templar was circling through

his heart and fancy, as he strode hurriedly up and down his study, his face agitated by passionate thought, and his lips quivering with the intensity of his feelings, — they might perhaps think that the matter was not so "light" after all, and that any word suggestive of indolence was the most inapplicable that could be used.

In reading novels, but little regard is paid to the high genius which they sometimes manifest. The interest of the story is the test which is usually applied by the general reader. A young lady reads with great delight "The Scottish Chiefs," "The Children of the Abbey," or "Santo Sebastiano." The sentiments are refined, the incidents please, and the whole work is "*so* interesting!" She takes up "The Bride of Lammermoor," a tragedy which Sophocles might have written, had he lived in this age, and acknowledges that, though it is interesting, it is an unpleasant book, for it ends badly. And thus she judges. To her, Miss Porter, Mrs. Roche, Mrs. Radcliffe, Miss Edgeworth, Scott, Bulwer, James, and Dickens, are all delightful novelists, all interesting, and therefore all equally good, except that Scott and Dickens are sometimes inclined to low humor, and are not always so refined as the others. At the same time, she acknowledges that reading their books is a frivolous occupation, and is likely to unfit the mind for practical duties; and she throws out dubious hints of the histories and philosophies which form the staple of her reading, and of the scientific lectures which she honors with her attendance.

The absence in most minds of any clear principles of criticism, and the many bad and feeble novels which are mixed up confusedly with those which are excellent, are the probable causes of this hallucination. We are often

struck with the lack of discrimination, even of sensible people, on this subject. Smollet and Fielding are placed in the same category with Ainsworth and Lever, and all are often confounded with Dickens. The peculiar taste and idiosyncrasy of each writer, the diversity both in the subject and the manner of its treatment, the different faculties exercised by each, and the wide difference in the moral character unconsciously impressed on their works, — all these points are repeatedly overlooked. All these works please, and help to while away an hour of *ennui* or leisure, and they all are classed under one undistinguishing name. Few think that the mere fact of writing a good work of fiction entitles an author to a high rank, even among those who are called imaginative writers. Pope, they think, will outlive the whole tribe.

Novel-writing, then, is generally deemed to be as "easy as lying;" and the facility with which things called novels are written seems to favor the dogma. Still, we humbly conceive it to be an error. Many persons have attained a marvellous proficiency in falsehood, and tell lies as assiduously as a friar does his beads; but the number of great novelists is small. Lying, therefore, is no key to the mystery of romance. Let us seek the solution in a rarer quality — truth. "I can write prose as well as Mr. Pope," said the sagacious Edmund Curll, the bookseller; "but he has a *knack* of rhyming which I do not possess." Now, the difference between Mr. Curll and Mr. Pope is no greater than that which exists between good and bad novelists. The former have a certain "knack" which the latter cannot obtain — and this is the knack of seeing and telling the truth. Here is an important distinction. The power of faithfully delineating life, character, society and manners, is

one of the rarest gifts of genius. In its greatest manifestations, it is felt to be the noblest exercise of a creative mind.

Now, Mr. James, in some of the most important qualifications as a novelist, is remarkably deficient. He has little objectivity. He is chained to his own consciousness. His insight into character and life is feeble. He cannot go out of his own little world of thought and emotion, and sympathize with other grades and modes of being. Everything he writes is "sicklied o'er" with his own feelings. There is no spontaneous exercise of his faculties, — none of that yielding of the will and reason to the impulses of imagination and passion, — none of that running over of the heart in the worship of the mind's creations, — none of that forgetfulness of self in sympathy with other beings, — which we observe in the masters of his art. His plots, his characters, his emotions, his outbreaks of feeling, are all deliberated and forced. He places a moral reflection, or a feeble speculation, at due pauses in the march of his story, with a sort of mathematical precision. The reader who desires not to have his principles corrupted by unconscious sympathy with any act or utterances of the characters in the novel which may not square with the moral code, is soon relieved from any apprehension of the kind, by noticing that Mr. James follows the progress of the plot, catechism in hand, and reads a homily from it whenever the necessities of morality require. If he had written the tragedy of Othello, and had put into Iago's mouth the words which Shakspeare uses, he would have filled half of the page with notes, stating his reasons for such an outrage upon morality, carefully distinguishing between his own opinions and those of the character, and

adding copious truisms on the wickedness of malice and revenge. Mothers, therefore, think they can trust their children to the care of Mr. James, and are willing that they should journey through the land of romance under his guidance. As soon as one of his novels is issued, the newspapers devote a column to his "beautiful" moral reflections and rose-colored sentiments. Readers who have a right to demand that the journal should be filled with news and advertisements, find themselves cheated and bored, by being compelled to admire the old speculations of Mr. James on destiny, fatalism, the affections, the will, and such other topics as form the staple of his colloquies with the reader.

Now, this is "from the purpose" of novel-writing. To a person accustomed to the manner of greater and more artistical novelists, it is an unendurable infliction. If the thoughts were valuable in themselves, bore any marks of originality and freshness, seemed to be called forth naturally by the incidents related, or were woven with any skill into the texture of the narrative, they might be pleasing; but the understanding of Mr. James never succeeds in the attempt to clutch an original idea, or to speculate on any subject which requires dialectical powers; and, consequently, he doses the reader with truisms, or perplexes him with reveries. He gives dim hints of his opinions on any question of metaphysics which crosses the path of his narrative, but he does not grasp and attempt to settle it. The most striking instances of "catching at ideas by the tail," of which we have any knowledge, are seen in his reveries on destiny, which reäppear in each successive work that comes from his fertile pen and unfruitful intellect. It seems astonishing, that a man could have this subject so often in

his mind, for a period of twenty years, and not blunder upon some opinion about it, correct or erroneous. He does not appear to know, that his unformed notions on this point, so far as they can be reduced to formulas, lead directly to fatalism.

But the great defect of Mr. James as a novelist is his lack of skill in the creation or accurate delineation of individual character. If the novel be intended as a mirror of actual life, either past or present, it should contain not only events, but men and women. Character should be exhibited, not didactically, but dramatically. We demand human beings, — not embodied antitheses, or personified qualities, thoughts or passions. The author has no right to project himself into his characters, and give different proper names to one personality. We want a forcible conception and consistent development of individual minds, with traits and peculiarities which constitute their distinction from other minds. They should be drawn with sufficient distinctness to enable the reader to give them a place in his memory, and to detect all departures, either in language or action, from the original types. We desire beings, not ideas; something concrete, not abstract.

To fulfil this condition seems easy; but the scarcity of men and women in current romances and plays proves that it is both difficult and indispensable. A wide range of characterization is very rarely found, even in the works of men of genius, or rather men *with* genius. Byron's power in this respect only extended to one character, and that was his own, placed in different circumstances, and modified by varying impulses. When he aimed at a larger range, and attempted to give freshness and life to individual creations, the result was feebleness

and failure, which the energy and splendor of his diction could not wholly conceal. Manfred, Childe Harold, and Don Juan, are the different names of one mind. Shakspeare's Timon comprehends them all, and is also more naturally drawn. Innumerable instances might be given of strenuous attempts made in this difficult department, which have ended in ignominious failure. Dr. Young's Zanga and Shiel's Pescara are ideas and passions embodied. Iago is a man, possessing ideas and passions.

In truth, to be successful in the exact delineation of character, requires a rare combination of powers, — a large heart and a comprehensive mind. It is the attribute of universality, not of versatility, or subtilty. It can be obtained only by outward, as well as inward, observation. That habit of intense brooding over individual consciousness, of making the individual mind the centre and circumference of everything, which is common to many eminent poets of the present age, has turned most of them into egotists, and limited the reach of their minds. They are great in a narrow sphere. They have little of that catholicity of spirit which is even "tolerant to opposite bigotries;" which seeks to display men as they are, not as they may be, or ought to be; which is not fanatical for one idea, and seeks not to be considered as the one inhabitant of the whole earth. Most of our great poets of the present century have taken the world into their hands, and made it over again, agreeably to a type of excellence in their own imaginations. The current subjective metaphysics of the day pursues the same method. Egotism in poetry and in philosophy meets us everywhere. The splendid mental qualities often exercised in both redeem them from the

censure we apply to meaner and smaller attempts in the same one-sided, subjective method.

Not in this manner did Shakspeare work. It was not from a lack of imagination that he did not turn everything that he touched into "something rich and strange." His excursions into the land of dream and fancy throw all others into the shade. But he knew when and where outward men and events should modify inward aspirations and feelings. He would not do injustice even to crime or folly, but represented both as they are. In what may be called the creation of character, in distinction from its delineation, as in Hamlet, Macbeth, and Lear, his excellence is unapproachable. In no other department in which the human intellect can be exercised, does it so nearly approach the divine, as in this. It is creation in the highest human sense of the term. It takes the elements of humanity, and combines them in such a manner as to produce a new individual, essentially different from other beings, yet containing nothing which clashes with the principles of human nature. Who believes that a character exactly like Macbeth or Miranda ever existed; yet who ever thought they were unnatural? In fact, these ideal beings are as true existences to the soul, as any friends or enemies whom we see bodily. They are more real than most of the names of persons which we read in history. We quote their sayings, and refer to their actions, as if they were living beings. They are objects to us of love or hate. We take sides for or against them, in all their principles and actions. We forget the author in his creations.

The delineation of character, in which observation, reflection and imagination, are variously exercised, is also a high merit in a poet or novelist. English litera-

ture can boast many authors who have evinced great skill in the use of this power, and it is indispensable to the novelist of real life. The Vicar of Wakefield, Parson Adams, Squire Western, Rob Roy, Baillie Nicol Jarvie, and Tony Weller, are names taken at random, but they are all living beings. They are our friends from the moment we make their acquaintance. Has Mr. James added one to this company? Has he delineated a single character which is wedded to our memories? Yet few authors have written more novels; and his volumes are filled with more names of persons than would suffice for a chronological table to a universal history.

He has certain types of character, which he generally reproduces in each successive novel. And here we would do Mr. James complete justice. He has an exact sense of moral distinctions, and his personages, though not strictly individuals, are walking essays on character, replete with instruction, and displaying some analytical skill. His hero is generally brave, loving, noble in mind and heart, combining reflection with action; and is a fit model for imitation, if we except the number of men he slays in the course of the story. As he does this, however, in a perfectly chivalrous way, and is justified in it by the usages of the times in which he is supposed to live, we hardly think that even the peace societies would take much exception to the practice. The moral tone of thought and action is generally high and true. The heroine is always idealized into something which is neither spirit nor flesh and blood. We perceive that the author has an exalted feeling of the beauty of woman's character, and has a desire to represent it in the concrete, so that it will strike forcibly upon the heart,

and be garnered in the memory; but he fails in his purpose. His women, like his men, are ideas and feelings embodied. They are constructed, not created, or painted; built, not drawn. They do not stand boldly from the canvas. They are, to our minds, reflections on female character, like those we read in the "Rambler." We are told by the author that they act, suffer, love, and hate; but we do not find it out for ourselves. His heroine is so beatified with description, that she loses all hold upon sympathy. Di Vernon and Jeanie Deans whisper in our hearts that she does not strictly belong to the sex. She is a beautiful icicle, flushed with the sun's tints, and having the appearance, but not the reality, of warmth. She is a frail, delicate, lovely, unreal creature, whom we praise and admire, as we do all that is good and beautiful. We hope that she will get safely through all her troubles — that her health will not be injured by mental distress or outward accident — and that she will in the end be happily married. She is "A Young Lady's Guide," walking "from the covers."

Now, all this, we repeat, is "from the purpose" of novel-writing. If we compare one of Mr. James's heroines either with a fine creation, like Desdemona, or a natural delineation, like Sophia Western, or a purely ideal portrait, like Shelley's Cythna, we perceive that he fails in each and every department of the creation and portraiture of character. She is neither the reality nor the possibility of woman.

Connected with these names of good persons, there is generally a scoundrel. The mechanical nature of Mr. James's mind is shown in the construction of his wicked personages, more than in anything else. His rascal is

an unmitigated rascal. He takes the idea of a man with a sharp intellect and great capacity, whose whole nature is under the dominion of selfish passion, — gives the idea a name, and intermingles it with the machinery of his plot. This criminal appears regularly in every novel, and labors assiduously to overthrow the hero and heroine. He is something like Gammon, in "Ten Thousand a Year." He has the advantage over goodness until nearly the end of the volume, and is then dismissed to proper punishment. This type of character is the most forcible of the author's attempts; but Rashleigh Osbaldistone, or Varney, throws it into the shade. Whenever Mr. James aims to draw humorous persons, to fill in the spaces of his narrative, he never succeeds. He cannot even make them say witty or humorous things.

We might extend these remarks to other personages in our author's novels; but it is needless. If we are correct in the view we have taken, it is proved that Mr. James, in several high qualities of romance, is deficient. Yet he is compared, by many of his admirers, with Scott. Their reasoning to support so singular a conjunction must be drawn from the stores of honest Fluellen. Mr. James chooses historical events as the basis or auxiliary of his plot, and pours forth novels as other men do essays; Sir Walter Scott did the same; therefore, they bear a surprising resemblance to each other as novelists. This is the old argument; "There is a mountain in Wales, and there is a mountain in Macedon." In truth, no two writers have less in common, in the essentials of their art, than Scott and James. Scott's marvellous range of character, the fertility with which he created or painted individual beings, his genial sympathy with

his race, his remarkable objectivity of mind, his open sense to all outward objects, would alone constitute a great gulf between him and James. He did not repeat himself in his novels. He wrote fast, because his mind produced quickly. In the poorest of his novels, he always gives us some characters whom we ever remember with pleasure. Mr. James's knowledge of history, great as it is, and much as he draws upon it, is used without any of the peculiar power of imagination with which Scott gave life and hue to what were before mere names, and made his readers contemporaries with the past. A king, a man-at-arms, or a tournament, delineated by the author of "Waverley," is presented to our minds as vividly as real personages or events which have passed before our own eyes. To this pictorial imagination Mr. James has little claim. He gives to his scenes the vividness of history, not that of reality or romance.

A writer who chooses great subjects and personages for his theme often obtains that rank in general estimation which should be held only by those who treat them with eminent ability. Mr. James is considered by many to be a greater man than Mr. Dickens, because he delineates kings and nobles; describes battles; shows a minute acquaintance with history; makes all his characters mathematically moral or immoral; strains ever to obtain a certain stilted elevation of thought and sentiment; is careful never to wound the most fastidious delicacy with any words which may convey or suggest unpleasant and vulgar images; and speculates dubiously on government, nature, the arts, religion and destiny. We are quite sick of hearing him praised for his attempts, instead of being judged by his execution. One

of Mr. Dickens's coachmen is more worthy of admiration than one of Mr. James's kings. A cardinal, or a pope may be a loftier personage than a poor parish priest; to delineate the former, "from the heart outwards, and not from the flesh inwards," may be a greater triumph of art than to succeed in portraying the latter; but still Parson Adams "bears the gree" from all the clerical dignitaries of romance. The nature of the man should not be confounded with his name or his garb. To call a personage a bishop, and to represent him in the dress of his order, is not to delineate a bishop. Beneath all externals, there are a human heart and brain, and an individuality distinguishing him from every other bishop. To exhibit him dramatically, either in play or novel, it is indispensable that these characteristics should be preserved.

It may be asked, why it is, if Mr. James is thus deficient in the higher qualities of the novelist, that his works are so popular. Are they not read and admired by thousands? They *are* read, admired, and forgotten. They are not read a second time. By the time one has passed from the memory, another flows into it, which, in its turn, gives place to a third. No characters or incidents adhere to the mind, and become to it a possession forever. After we have studied them all, we find that they have only given us general ideas, or furnished us with historical knowledge. We love and remember none of his personages for themselves alone. They are all insensibly resolved into their original abstractions. We recollect one of his few types of character, as we remember a proposition in Combe's Constitution of Man.

But it may still be asked, Whence comes it that his novels are read at all? We might here avail ourselves

of a New England privilege, and answer this question with another equally pertinent: Why are the productions of fanaticism, quackery, bad taste, and sentimentality read? Why do melodramas draw larger audiences than Macbeth? But we have no wish to evade difficulties by insisting strongly on the rights derived from our local position. We answer, therefore, by acknowledging, that, though the test of merit is not success, yet there must be some reason in the construction of a popular book to account for its popularity; and, in Mr. James's case, this public favor is owing to the intricacy and interest of his plots.

The incidents in his novels are brought together with much cunning skill. Every person who begins one of his books desires to get through it as quickly as possible. To many this may appear the highest praise, and to settle the question at once. To us it appears to do no such thing. Although the power of creating incident, and of skilfully linking one event to another, is an important element of a good novel, yet it is not the most important, nor is it one in which Mr. James enjoys preëminence. When we discover the secret of his method of story-building, our admiration decreases greatly. We acknowledge that his novels are interesting, that they awaken and fix attention; but we discriminate between the kind of interest they excite, and the interest of "Tom Jones" or "Ivanhoe." We perceive that his plots are pieces of machinery, constructed according to the laws of mathematics. Their intricacy, and not their naturalness, is the source of their hold upon our minds. The characters seem not to have free play. They are puppets, moved by the scheming brain of the author. We know that the hero and the heroine will enjoy no felicity

or peace until the conclusion of the third volume, and we hasten to the consummation as fast as our eyes can carry us. The world to which we are introduced is not a free, common world, where there are chances in favor both of vice and virtue, but a fenced park, full of man-traps and spring-guns. A sort of iron necessity conducts everything. We do not feel ourselves safe, until we have come to the conclusion. A sort of feverish, unhealthy excitement is the feeling we experience as we read. There is always some murder, forgery, or other dark crime, in the past or the future, which we have a natural desire to expose and punish. The good characters are entangled in such a web of evil; there is such a provoking succession of premeditated accidents which seem untoward; they are walking so long on the verge of a deep gulf, into which the slightest false step may precipitate them; that our feelings of philanthropy are enlisted in their behalf, and the common axioms which forbid cruelty to animals impel us to wish them speedy death or happiness.

Mr. James is also a spendthrift of human life. When he has done with a character, or thinks it necessary to enhance the interest of his story by something awful, he strikes his pen into one of his *dramatis personæ*, without the slightest mercy, and literally blots him from existence. He knows well that murder and violence are popular in romance, and he is desirous, like a sagacious book merchant, to make the supply equal to the demand. Whether he has any compunctious visitings of conscience, after gratifying, in this manner, his murderous thoughts, we are unable to determine; but we think the carelessness with which he slays evinces the feebleness with which he conceives. If his personages were real

to his own heart or imagination, if they were anything more than clothed ideas and passions, we doubt if he would part with them so easily, or kill them with such *nonchalance*. His hero, of course, is preserved amidst the general slaughter, but not without many wounds both of the body and spirit.

We have heard the style of Mr. James praised, but on what principle of taste we could never discover. To us it seems but ill adapted to narrative. It has little flow and perspicuity, and no variety. It is usually heavy, lumbering, and monotonous. His sentences seem constructed painfully, yet doggedly, and not to spring spontaneously from his brain, inspired by the thought or feeling they are intended to convey. Half of the words seem in the way of the idea, and the latter appears not to have strength enough to clear the passage. Occasionally a swift, sharp sentence comes, like a flash of lightning, from the cloud of his verbiage, and relieves the twilight of his diction; but generally the reader must plod laboriously through one of his volumes, and, if he can overlook the style in the incidents, it is all the better for his patience. James has none of that wonderful power of clear narration which we observe in Scott; that ductile style, which changes with each change in the story, and seems insensibly to mould itself into the shape of the thought and emotion which are uppermost at the time. Nor has he any of that quiet, demure humor, which Scott often infuses into the very heart of his diction, as in the first hundred pages of "Redgauntlet." There is a strait-laced gravity in Mr. James's manner. which is often ridiculous, because wholly inappropriate. In all those higher qualities of style, which do not relate to the mere rhetorical arrangement of words and sen-

tences, but spring directly from passion, fancy, or imagination, and bear the impress of the writer's nature, he is very deficient. There are but few felicitous passages in his manifold volumes. He has hardly any of those happy combinations of words, which stick fast to the memory, and do more than pages to express the author's meaning. With all his command of a certain kind of elegant language, he has little command of expression. His imagination, as a shaping power, has either no existence, or he writes too rapidly to allow it time to perform its office. His imagery is common; and his manner of arraying a trite figure in a rich suit of verbiage, only makes its essential commonness and poverty more evident. His style is not dotted over with any of those shining points, either of imagery or epigram, which illumine works of less popularity and pretension. To us his temperament seems sluggish, and is only kindled into energy by the most fiery stimulants. "A slow, rolling grandiloquence" seems his rhetorical ideal, and he does not always succeed in attaining even that humble height of expression. As his object, however, seems to be to fill out three volumes with a narration of incidents which will please, rather than to cultivate any of those qualities of condensation and picturesqueness which would compress them into one, we may not be justified in interfering between him and his bookseller.

In these remarks we do not intend to say that our novelist has no passages which clash with this opinion of his style. It would be a monstrous supposition, that a human being could possibly write a hundred volumes, without being betrayed at times into eloquence and beauty of expression. We refer, in our strictures, to general traits, not to individual exceptions; to the desert,

and not to the oases in it. Mr. James evidently possesses talent sufficiently great to enable him to write well, if he could only learn to "labor and to wait;" but he is cursed with the mania of book-making, and seems to look more to the number of his pages than to the quality of his rhetoric.

In these remarks on Mr. James, as a novelist, we have intended to do him no injustice. We are willing to grant him the praise of talents and learning, and to do fit honor to the moral purpose he seems to have in his writings. But we dispute his claim to those qualities which constitute the chief excellence of a novelist; we doubt his possession of that fecundity of mind which can produce a series of novels without constant repetition of old types of character, and old machinery of plot. If the severity of our criticism has ever run into fanciful exaggeration, it has been owing to the petulant humor engendered by exposing unfounded pretension.

Indeed, Mr. James does not appear like a man who could be wounded or hurt by severe criticism. The abstract character of the personages of his novels affects our own view of himself. We oppose him as we would oppose an idea or a principle. We do not consider him as an individual. Our imagination refuses to shape the idea suggested by his name into a palpable person. Whenever an author appears to our mind in a concrete form, the quality of mercy we extend to his compositions is never "strained." We feel for his pardonable vanity, and we would launch at him no sarcasm calculated to lacerate his delicate sensibilities. He is a human being, a brother, or, at least, a cousin. If he be a dunce, we pat him on the shoulder, and tell him to try again. If he be a man of talents, with some absurd or

pernicious principles, we regret that the latter should weaken the respect we bear to the former. But not so is it with Mr. James. We no more think of hurting his feelings by sharp criticism, than of wounding the sensibility of Babbage's calculating machine by detecting it in a mathematical error. To us he is a thin essence, impenetrable to the weapons of earthly combat, and unmoved by any hail-storm of satire which might seem to beat on his frame. He is an abstraction, and, therefore, the last person to expect that a reviewer will hide the thorns of analysis in the flowers of panegyric.

SYDNEY SMITH.*

Few persons on either side of the Atlantic are ignorant of the name of the Rev. Sydney Smith, the wit, the whig, the Edinburgh reviewer, and the holder of Pennsylvania bonds. But if we except his lately published "Letters on American Debts," his name is more familiar than his writings. It is not a matter of surprise, that the brilliant petulance and grotesque severity of the "Letters" did not win him many admirers in the United States. The fact that they insulted our national pride, and were unjust and sweeping in their censures, was sufficient to prevent their singular merit, as compositions, from being acknowledged. After having withstood all the falsehood and exaggeration of the London press, — a press which, in the sturdy impudence with which it retains its hold upon a lie, excels all others in the world, — we felt irritated, that a "pleasant man had come out against us," with the expectation that we were to be "laid low by a joker of jokes." A more thorough knowledge of Smith's writings, and a perception of the ingrained peculiarities of his character, would, we think, abate much of the grim asperity with which we received that specimen of his nimble wit and sarcas-

*The Works of the Rev. Sydney Smith. Second edition. In three volumes. London: Longmans & Co. 8vo. 1840. — *North American Review, July*, 1844.

tic rebukes. If we knew the man, we should see, that to return an acrimonious answer would be the most ridiculous of all possible modes of retort. While he has the laugh of all Europe on his side, from London to St. Petersburg, he may safely defy the utmost severity of denunciation, backed by the most labored array of facts. Revenge is to be sought, not in denouncing, but in quoting him. He has written for the last forty years upon the affairs of England, with the same careless disregard of the external proprieties of literature, and the same fearlessness of tone, which he has displayed in his censure of the United States; but as the offences which prompt strong invective have been far more numerous and flagrant in his own country than in ours, the brilliancy and bitterness of his satire have never appeared to more advantage than when confined to home scenes and home institutions. His hostility to us arises from pardonable ignorance and personal prejudice, and therefore his accusations are to be regarded with suspicion: his hostility to many features of English society and English law sprung from his conscience and personal knowledge, and may be received with confidence. He has always been a strong friend of liberal principles, and an unflinching and merciless enemy to fraud and corruption. There have been, in the present century, many able Englishmen who have made injustice and bigotry appear detestable; but to Sydney Smith, more than to any other, belongs the merit of making them appear ridiculous. Placemen, pedants, hypocrites, tories, who could doze very placidly beneath threats and curses, fretted and winced at the sharp sting of his wit. He has subjected himself to charges which are most injurious to a clergyman, — impropriety, levity, infidelity;

he has allowed his opinions to stand in the way of his professional advancement, rather than swerve from the principles of his political creed, or forbear shooting out his tongue at hypocrisy and selfishness.

But even if his services to humanity and freedom had not given him the privilege to be a little saucy to republics, the individuality of his character would screen him from the indignation we feel against libellers whose judgments are less influenced by eccentric humor. We desire to learn Sydney Smith's opinion on any matter of public interest, not because his temper of mind is such as to give it intrinsic weight, but because we know it will generally be shrewd, honest, independent, peculiar in its conception, and racy in its expression. Almost everything he has written is so characteristic, that it would be difficult to attribute it to any other man. The marked individual features, and the rare combination of powers, displayed in his works, give them a fascination, unconnected with the subject of which he treats, or the general correctness of his views. He sometimes hits the mark in the white, he sometimes misses it altogether; for he by no means confines his pen to themes to which he is calculated to do justice; but whether he hits or misses, he is always sparkling and delightful. The charm of his writings is somewhat similar to that of Montaigne's or Charles Lamb's, — a charm which owes much of its power to that constant intrusion of the writer's individuality, by which we make a companion where we expected to find only a book; and this companion, as soon as we understand him, becomes one of our most valued acquaintances.

The familiarity of Sydney Smith's manner does not consist merely in his style; indeed, the terseness and

brilliancy of his diction, though not at all artificial in appearance, could not have been attained without labor and solicitude; — but it is the result of the blunt, fearless, severe, yet good-humored, nature of the man. He gives us not only his opinions, but himself; he allows us to see all the nooks and crannies of his heart and understanding. His frankness of expression is a glass wherein his whole personality is mirrored. He does not observe any of those literary conventionalties which distinguish a writer from his book. His peculiarity in this respect is the more worthy of notice, as it is so rare. He possesses, more than any other author of the present century, the faculty of talking in printed sheets.

The difference between the tone and character of literature and of social life is worthy of more attention than it generally receives. The ignorance of those who are called "book-men" arises, in great part, from a disregard of this distinction. Many of them think they can obtain a knowledge of history and human nature by haunting libraries; and if "standard" histories fairly reflected events and persons, and standard philosophies gave us man instead of ethics and metaphysics, they would not be in the wrong. But this is not the case. Before books can be rightly interpreted, a knowledge of life and affairs is necessary. A very slight acquaintance with the different ranks and modes of society, a familiarity with two or three politicians who contribute to congressional or parliamentary debates, a little companionship with the world's rulers in literature and government, will soon teach us the difference between actions and the record of actions, between the man and the author. We then, to some extent, see the world, not in its official costume, but in nightgown and slippers. The dignitary

whose sonorous sentences caught and charmed the ear and seemed to lift him above the weaknesses of humanity, becomes simply a man, — perhaps a prattler or a coxcomb. Many a statesman, whose talk is garnished with ribaldry and profanity, and who utters in conversation the grossest personalities against his opponents, no sooner rises to make an oration, than his whole course of speech undergoes a change, and the newspapers inform us of the grandeur of thought which characterized what is justly termed his "effort." A state document is often one of the rarest of juggles. Who shall say what false notions we obtain of governors from their missives and messages? Who can calculate what a vast amount of deception and quackery is hidden in the jargon of official papers and legislative enactments? The difference between Hume's James the First and Scott's King Jamie, between a newspaper report of a public dinner and that of an eye and ear witness, hardly measures the difference between a dignitary in undress and a dignitary in buckram.

It is not wonderful, then, that our notions of dignity are somewhat shocked in reading an author who is not ashamed to write what he is not ashamed to think, who speaks to the world as he would speak to his immediate friends, who forces his meaning into no conventional moulds, but gives free course to all the natural and healthy impulses of his nature, and is not frightened into feebleness by the desire of "preserving his dignity." Indeed, in this last word we have the fundamental principle of artificial composition. An author conceives that he must be dignified, even if he be not profound, accurate, or powerful. The pharisees and dolts of society find the term a convenient substitute for everything val-

uable which it assumes to represent. In literature, it is the last refuge of mediocrity, — a stilted elevation, on which tottering debility mumbles barren truisms.

Now, in this world, it is more important that we obtain what is real than what is dignified. Truth, in the homeliest attire, is better than falsehood in balanced periods. If we desire to know the condition of England during the last century, it is not enough that we read grave histories and lying laureate odes. Painfully elaborated sentences, affecting to describe battles, sieges, administrations, — nonsensical impersonations of the country under the names of Albion and Britannia, cannot give us the vivid pictures of government and society which we find painted to the life in the novels of Fielding and Smollett. In the latter, we see the vulgarity, the selfishness, the cruelty, the ignorance, the vice, the clashing opinions, the manners or the want of manners, both of men in authority, and men in subjection. The rough, sturdy virtues of the English people, likewise, essentially different from those ascribed to them in orations, are made apparent, amid all the exaggeration and caricature of romance. Dickens's novels are more faithful representations of England at the present day than can be obtained from parliamentary debates and reports of committees. Dr. Johnson's conversation, it is known, was pointed, vigorous, and racy; but it has been said, that, when he wrote, he translated his ideas into *Johnsonese*. The feelings, thoughts, and characters of men are apt to pass through a similar process, when forced to take form in written compositions. The distinction made by the old philosophers between their esoteric and exoteric doctrines, their doctrines for the few and their doctrines for the many, is still preserved among politicians and his-

torians. The *élite*, who are in the confidence and company of the latter, receive very different ideas of government and life from what they find written in public documents.

Now, Sydney Smith has no regard whatever for the smooth decencies and accredited proprieties of expression. He seems to have obtained a glance behind the curtain of affairs, to have seen with how little wisdom and how great hypocrisy the world is governed, and to have been unable to keep the secret. He introduces the world to itself, and enables men to view the Grand Lamas of authority and opinion before whom they cringe. He is the very opposite of the class of dignified writers we have been considering. He hardly acquiesces in the harmless deceptions of language and manner. He has an inextinguishable contempt for every shape and shade of what is called humbug. He does not seem to think that an essay for the Edinburgh Review should differ at all, in tone and style, from the talk of a plain, honest, intelligent man at his own fireside. Even those stilts which the simplest writers employ, to distinguish between their conversation and composition, and to give to their opinions a general rather than an individual character, he kicks away from him with the careless spurn of contempt. He never writes without having something to say, and sees no reason why he should not say it just as it is felt and conceived. The external forms of literature, the hollow civilities and ceremonies of legislative assemblies, the insipid formulas of expression, which obtain in social life under the names of politeness and gentility, he violates or ridicules without the slightest fear of male or female prudes. He never would call a member of congress "honorable" by courtesy.

No rules of etiquette bridle his wit or his whims. No fear of being called an egotist or a scoffer, no apprehension of misapprehension, prevents him from indulging the full bent of his peculiarities. If a certain dress or manner has been long considered the distinctive sign of a profession, he delights to make it the mark of his mocking gibes. Though a clergyman himself, he has no veneration for any of the external badges of his class. To him, there is no sanctity attaching to a sermon by virtue of its name and form; but he judges it as he would any other composition. If it be dull, pedantic, or fanatical, if it inculcate tyranny and justify oppression, if it employ the phraseology of religion to cover the practices of fraud, he treats it with no more courtesy than if it were the latest offspring of Grub-street. He sees something more than wigs and surplices. He never takes the outward sign for the thing signified. No writer is less under the vassalage of names. Piety has, in his mind, no absolute connection with priests, morality none with moralists, government none with governors, liberty none with radicals, law none with judges. It is evident that such a writer must be continually disturbing the associations of his readers. His independence is to be honored; for though such distinctions are apparent to reason, it often requires much courage to practise upon them in life, and still more to practise upon them in composition.

This frank sincerity of Sydney Smith gives a freshness, vivacity, and individuality to his compositions, which never fail to please, even when his subjects are unpromising. He is to other essayists what Herodotus is to other historians. We are conducted to no sublime heights of abstraction, we are plunged into no sublime

depths of sentiment; but we jog along a pleasant road, listening to the talk of a pleasant man, and detecting meaning even in his mirth, and wisdom even in his oddities. As soon as he comes to speak of social or political wrong, we find he can smite as well as smile. He neither talks about the inherent rights of man, nor philosophizes about liberty; indeed, he rather laughs at that, as moonshine; but he strikes directly at the thing itself, in obedience to the quick impulse of his heart. With a fancy teeming with images to illustrate both his reasoning and his indignation, he is never deluded by it in his speculations on the practical affairs of the world. He writes of men from an observation of their manners and conduct in daily life, and never idealizes their condition. He refuses to abstract his notion of a country from the people who compose it. John Bull, Jonathan, Sawney, and Paddy, are oftener on his lips than England, America, Scotland, and Ireland; and as for Britannia, Columbia, Caledonia, and Hibernia, they find no place in his vocabulary, except when they can minister to his drollery. Great Britain, with her fleets, and armies, and possessions, on whose dominions the sun never sets,

> "Whose path is o'er the mountain wave,
> Whose home is on the deep,"

is a grand subject for the sublime abstractions of the orator and poet; but Smith dwells snugly in the concrete. His opinion of the nation is formed from personal observation of the people. He has no notion of flattering gruff John Bull with dainty names. "Beer and Britannia are inseparable ideas in the mind of every

Englishman," he tells us; and in telling us that, he breaks the charm.

In the various articles on America, contributed to the Edinburgh Review, the only points on which he lashes us are slavery and national vanity, — one awaking his indignation, the other his ridicule. But in the very paper in which he asks, "Who reads an American book?" he gives that exquisitely humorous account of English taxation, which is known to every schoolboy. Here is a specimen of his manner of speaking of foreign countries, in which it will be seen he does not spare his own. "One of the great advantages of the American government is its cheapness. The American king has about £5,000 *per annum;* the vice-king, £1,000. They hire their Lord Liverpool at about a thousand *per annum*, and their Lord Sidmouth (a good bargain) at about the same sum. Their Mr. Crokers are inexpressibly reasonable, — somewhere about the price of an English doorkeeper, or bearer of the mace. Life, however, seems to go on very well, in spite of these small salaries." His praise of America is most hearty, when he answers some libels of tory tourists, interested in the abuse of republicanism; but it is always tinged with his peculiar habit of mind, and it is always Jonathan that he praises, not Columbia. All dignity derived from titles, high station, or the customs of speech, everything, in short, which is "gilded seeming" and not plain reality, is reduced to common sense by a similar process of caricature. His works, on this account, are more radical in spirit and tendency than any others, for they strike at all cant whatever, whether it be the cant of monarchy or the cant of democracy. He takes away all the screens which give a factitious dignity and elevation to govern-

ments and men. We do not seem to read his writings, — we listen to them. We obtain the impression, that a shrewd, honest, independent man, full of talent and information, and careless of all external propriety, is talking to us with a delightful mixture of sense, wit, eccentricity, and feeling. A speech from the throne, a president's message, or a report of a society established to overthrow or promote anything, from the pen of Sydney Smith, would be the strangest, and yet the most natural, document that has been "published by authority" during the last ten centuries.

Few men can write with this disregard of common forms, and this perfect expression of individual peculiarities, without falling into coarseness or buffoonery. The familiar writer is apt to be his own satirist. Out of his own mouth is he judged. The peculiarities of his character must be good, and so combined as to produce a pleasing effect, or his sincerity is liable to be his greatest enemy. A man who casts from him all conventional drapery, and exhibits his whole nature without reserve, should be, it would seem, the greatest of saints or the greatest of egotists, to pass through the ordeal without loss of reputation or self-complacency. Sydney Smith is neither, and yet he has avoided the rocks on which familiarity usually splits. Some of the writers in Fraser's and Blackwood's Magazines often fell into a grave error, in discarding the stilts of style. They aimed to give a racy, conversational tone to their compositions, — to write as they would talk; and it must be admitted, that they obtained their object. For many years, they poured forth a mingled tide of wit, vulgarity, malice, learning, intolerance, and folly, which, when we consider that no man is bound to criminate himself, must

nave been done in the very simplicity and ignorance of malevolence. In almost every instance in which they basely or petulantly condemned an author, they were writing the bitterest of all condemnations on themselves. Papers steeped in misrepresentation and injustice, illustrating all the varieties of bad temper, rich in language drawn from the pot-house and the fish-market, and teeming with personalities of the grossest and most unjustifiable kind, — papers which have been the ideal models of every profligate newspaper hack in our own country, — were, no doubt, considered by these writers as fine specimens of familiar composition. Such familiarity we can obtain without resorting to books or bad company. But these men were masters of another style of thought and expression, essentially different from that we have indicated, — a style full of all saintly sentiment, and profuse in phrases of kindliness, piety, and gentle feeling. A comparison of the "Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life" with the most shameful vulgarities of the "Noctes," will give the best idea that can be obtained of the nature of this difference.

The writings of Sydney Smith are free from all vulgarities of the kind we have noted, because he is in reality an honest, true-hearted man. He can afford to be familiar. He is not all Billingsgate on one side of his mind, and all Arcadia on the other. The great peculiarity of his works, apart from the qualities of character they display, is their singular blending of the beautiful with the ludicrous; and this is the source of his refinement. He is keen and personal, almost fierce and merciless, in his attacks on public abuses; he has no check on his humor from authority or conventional forms; and yet he very rarely violates good taste. There is much

good nature in him, too, in spite of his severity. His quick perception of what is laughable modifies his sensibility to what is detestable. He cannot be grave for ten minutes, though on the gravest of subjects. His indignation and invective are almost ever followed by some jesting allusion or grotesque conceit. He draws down upon the object of his censure both scorn and laughter; and makes even abuse palatable, by clothing it in phrases or images which charm by their beauty or wit. When he writes on government and laws, he seems to detect deformity and deceit by an inner sense of harmony and proportion. He cannot lash the most criminal violations of humanity and rectitude, he cannot cut and thrust at the most monstrous pretensions of power, without considering the enormity a folly to be jeered at, as well as a crime to be denounced. So it is with his benevolent and religious feelings. His philanthropy expresses itself as often in jokes, in sly touches of humor, in broad gushes of fun and caricature, as in pathos and sympathy. And yet, the sentiment of beauty, amid all the humor, denunciation and extravagance, is constantly preserved, and prevents him from falling into buffoonery or harsh vituperation. It would be difficult to point out the source of his power of fascination in this respect; but it strikes us, on the first reading, as being different from anything else we have ever seen.

The collection of Sydney Smith's works which is now before us is principally made up of papers contributed to the Edinburgh Review, of which he was one of the founders, and the first editor. This celebrated journal, the great enemy of the garreteers, was projected in a garret. Few literary enterprises have had a more humble commencement. Smith says, in his preface, that

Jeffrey, Murray, and himself, "one day, happened to meet in the eighth or ninth story or flat in Buccleugh Place, the elevated residence of the then Mr. Jeffrey. I proposed that we should set up a Review; this was acceded to with acclamation. I was appointed editor, and remained long enough in Edinburgh to edit the first number of the Edinburgh Review. The motto I proposed for the Review was,

'Tenui musam meditamur avenâ:'
'We cultivate literature upon a little oatmeal.'

But this was too near the truth to be admitted, and so we took our present grave motto from *Publius Syrus*, of whom none of us had, I am sure, ever read a single line."

His contributions to the Review are scattered over its pages from 1802 to 1828. They are on a variety of topics, — Ireland, Catholic Claims, the Church, Sermons, Bishops, Prisons, Botany Bay, Poor Laws, Education, Missions, Methodists, Game Laws, Travels, America, and Miscellaneous Literature. All these subjects he has treated in his own way, from his own point of view, and each is illustrative of his character. Everything he touches he makes agreeable. No one should skip any articles from a fear of the dulness suggested by the name. Politics and political economy are the themes which he discusses perhaps with the most ability, the most severity, and the most brilliancy. We would call particular attention to the short reviews published in the earlier numbers of the Edinburgh, particularly to those on political sermons. The sharp, terse diction, the lively temperament, the quick perception, the brisk, tingling wit, the rich humor, at times so demure and sly, and at others so

broad and unreined, — these qualities strike us as much in the productions of Smith's youth, as in those of his maturity. The charge of infidelity brought against the Review, for which Lord Jeffrey was made responsible, was owing, probably, more to Smith's ridicule of clerical fanaticism, fopperies, affectations, and servilities, than to any other cause. Though a clergyman of the established church, no man was less hampered by a veneration for its ministers. During the period in which he wrote, preferment depended so much more on politics than piety, and the church was disgraced by so many clergymen willing to barter their souls for bishoprics, that we think his conduct was not only free from the charge of infidelity, but that it was justified by the circumstances. A curate, or a bishop, who lends his name to the defence of abuses, corruption, and intolerance, of all those errors and crimes which Christianity abhors, and does this from selfish considerations, to please a dominant power in the state, is worthy of the lash both of satire and invective; and, if the punishment be inflicted by a member of the same church which is disgraced by the culprit, there is a clear gain to its honor. Such a course takes from infidels their strongest practical argument, — the only argument that has any effect upon large bodies of people. Every triumph of irreligion has been gained by dextrously confounding the priests of the Gospel with the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel; and when the former have been false to their faith, the requisitions of their faith have been weapons with which scoffers have attacked both church and clergy. Though the articles to which we have referred may displease many worthy men, we can find nothing, either in them, or in other portions of these volumes, to justify the foolish and malignant

charge of infidelity, originally brought against them by placemen and political jobbers whose knavery he had exposed, and afterwards repeated by better men, who were ignorant of what they stigmatized.

The following extract shows with what shrewdness, honesty, courage and independence, he wrote about doctors of divinity and the affairs of the church. He says, (in 1802,) that the great object of modern sermons is to hazard nothing; their characteristic is decent debility.

"Pulpit discourses have insensibly dwindled from speaking to reading; a practice of itself sufficient to stifle every germ of eloquence. It is only by the fresh feelings of the heart, that mankind can be very powerfully affected. What can be more ludicrous than an orator delivering stale indignation, and fervor of a week old; turning over whole pages of violent passions, written out in German text; reading the tropes and apostrophes into which he is hurried by the ardor of his mind; and so affected by a preconcerted line and page, that he is unable to proceed further? The prejudices of the English nation have proceeded a good deal from their hatred to the French; and because that country is the native soil of elegance, animation and grace, a certain patriotic stolidity and loyal awkwardness have become the characteristics of this; so that an adventurous preacher is afraid of violating the ancient tranquillity of the pulpit, and the audience are commonly apt to consider the man who tires them less than usual as a trifler or a charlatan."

In an article on Dr. Rennel, he ridicules some fooleries in the forgotten writings of that clergyman, and puts the reverend gentleman into the class, numerous at that time, of "bad heads bawling for the restoration of exploded errors and past infatuation." The doctor had called the age, among other terms of reproach, a foppish age: and Smith asks, if there is not a class of fops as vain and shallow as any of their fraternity in Bond-street,—

"a class of fops not usually designated by that epithet — men clothed in profound black, with large canes, and strange amorphous hats — of big speech and imperative presence — talkers about Plato — great affecters of senility — despisers of women, and all the graces of life — fierce foes to common sense — abusive of the living, and approving no one who has not been dead at least a century." On being accused of intolerance, for some passages in one of his articles, Smith replies, "They complain of intolerance; a weasel might as well complain of intolerance, when he is throttled for sucking eggs." In arguing against the horror of some Christians at the thought of indulging even in innocent pleasures, he speaks of them as "always trembling at the idea of being entertained, and thinking no Christian safe who is not dull."

In his judgments of books, our author is sometimes as pert and insulting as his real good humor will allow. No critic is more felicitous or expeditious in the task of demolishing a dunce. The affectations of authors he detects by intuition, and makes them immeasurably ridiculous. In a happy epithet, or a fine combination of a few words, he often does the work of pages. He is ever racy and pointed, if not always correct, in his critical opinions. His mode of reviewing is like that which is practised in the ordinary conversation of gentlemen. A man who gives his opinion of a new publication at a dinner-table, or to a friend whom he meets in the streets, does not express himself as he would, if he were reviewing the book in a periodical. The "dignity of letters" would be observable in the latter. Smith is the same in print as in speech, — the same man in the Edinburgh Review that he is at his own fireside. This kind of

criticism is what poor authors dread. Puffs in the newspapers are no offsets to scorn in the markets. Many a scribbler has been destroyed by an after-dinner jest, kindly reported *verbatim* to him by a literary friend, after having been patted into self-complacency by the praises of magazines. An author, before he indulges the pleasing contemplation of being popular, should endeavor to know what is said of his works, as well as what is written of them. Smith's style of reviewing gives him accurate information on the former point, though at a great expense to his self-importance.

With all his levity and trifling, our author is generally just and fair in criticism. Macaulay exceeds him in the overpowering declamation with which he crushes and grinds to atoms the pretenders of literature and politics; but his exceeding severity sometimes excites commiseration for the offender; while Smith generally carries the reader along with him, even to the limits of caricature. When he dissects or cuffs a description of writers whom he includes under the general term of Noodles, he often seems to sink the person in the thing, and to treat of the genus rather than the individual. If we can conceive of a pleasant, jovial, experimental philosopher, pinning a beetle to the table, and deducing from its structure and contortions the general laws to which they may be referred, we may obtain some notion of the treatment which a Noodle suffers, when it is his fortune to fall into the hands of Sydney Smith. For any particular person of the class he has no enmity, but thinking that the bigotries and absurdities of the class itself are pernicious, he torments one of them as a warning to the rest. It was a sad day for Grub-street, when the critical offices of judge, jury and executioner, were all

combined in one man of wit, and the sentences of the court expressed in cutting jests. On the whole, if fools must be whipped, no humane and intelligent person would object to Sydney Smith as the wielder of the rod, — being pretty certain that the punishment would be inflicted with as much mercy as, under the circumstances, ought to be expected.

The notice of Dr. Parr contains the best criticism on the English of that celebrated linguist we have ever seen. The objection, that he never appears to forget himself, "or to be hurried by his subject into obvious language," is applicable to many other men whose trust is not in things but sentences. A foolish alarmist, named Bowles, wrote a furious pamphlet, in 1802, which Smith describes as being "written in the genuine spirit of the Windham and Pitt school; though Mr. Bowles cannot be called a servile copyist of either of these gentlemen, as he has rejected the logic of the one, and the eloquence of the other, and imitated them only in their headstrong violence and exaggerated abuse." An abstract of a play by Monk Lewis concludes in this wise: "Orsino stabs his own son, at the moment the king is in his son's power; falls down, from the wounds he has received in battle; and dies in the usual dramatic style, repeating twenty-two hexameter verses." In a review of a Frenchman's book of travels in England, after making some acute remarks on the mistakes of foreign tourists, Smith adds, "Mr. Jacob Fievée, with the most surprising talents for doing wrong, has contrived to condense and agglomerate every species of absurdity which has hitherto been made known, and even to launch out occasionally into new regions of nonsense with a boldness which well entitles him to the merit of

originality in folly, and discovery in impertinence." The same traveller ends his charges against the English by alleging that they have great pleasure in contemplating the spectacle of men deprived of their reason. "And we must have the candor to allow," adds the reviewer, "that the hospitality which Mr. Fievée experienced seems to afford some pretext for this assertion." Richard Lovell Edgeworth is happily characterized as possessing "the sentiments of an accomplished gentleman, the information of a scholar, and the vivacity of a first-rate harlequin. He is fuddled with animal spirits, giddy with constitutional joy; in such a state, he must have written on or burst. A discharge of ink was an evacuation absolutely necessary, to avoid fatal and plethoric congestion." Poor Mrs. Trimmer is informed, in another sharp review, that "she is a lady who flames in the van of Mr. Newbury's shop; and is, on the whole, dearer to mothers and aunts than any other author who pours the milk of science into the mouths of babes and sucklings."

A Mr. Styles answered Smith's paper on Methodism, in a manner which excited considerable anger and invective in the breast of the reviewer. He imputes an intolerant opinion to the sect of his victim, and adds, that "this reasonable and amiable maxim, repeated in every form of dulness, and varied in every attitude of malignity, is the sum and substance of Mr. Styles's pamphlet." In noting an objection to a former article, based on its use of ridicule rather than argument, Smith proceeds in a strain of wit, which in some degree apologizes for its injustice, to show, that "it is not the practice with destroyers of vermin to allow the little victims a veto upon the weapons used against them. If this

were otherwise, we should have one set of vermin banishing small-tooth combs; another protesting against mouse-traps; a third prohibiting the finger and thumb; a fourth exclaiming against the intolerable infamy of using soap and water. It is impossible, however, to listen to such pleas. They must all be caught, killed, and cracked, in the manner, and by the instruments, which are found most efficacious to their destruction; and the more they cry out, the greater plainly is the skill used against them." We believe the impudence of reviewing cannot exceed this.

In a sharp review of a Mr. Rose, who had attempted to bring the correctness of some facts in Fox's history into dispute, Smith exults over a detection of the errors of Rose's own book, in some characteristic sentences. "The species of talent which he pretends to is humble — and he possesses it not. He is a braggadocio of minuteness — a swaggering chronologer; — a man bristling up with small facts — prurient with dates — wantoning in obsolete evidence — loftily dull, and haughty in his drudgery; — and yet this is all pretence." In an article on prisons, Smith refers to the labors of Mrs. Fry, and the extravagance of some of the eulogists of her philanthropy. He advises the prison reformers to support all strong assertions with strong documents, and then slides off into the following exquisite stroke of humor: "The English are a calm, reflecting people; they will give time and money, when they are convinced; but they love dates, names, and certificates. In the midst of the most heart-rending narratives, Bull requires the day of the month, the year of our Lord, the name of the parish, and the countersign of three or four respectable householders. After these affecting circum-

stances, he can no longer hold out; but gives way to the kindness of his nature, — puffs, blubbers, and subscribes."

Smith's perception of moral distinctions is so acute, that he easily exposes the deceptions of style and sentiment. The immorality of a book he detects through the most cunning disguises. Right and wrong are never confounded, never run into each other, as he uses the terms. No man can plead his nobility of soul, his crushed affections, his refined sensibilities, for indulging in misanthropy and licentiousness. His condemnation of such perversities of genius is not, to be sure, always expressed in a serious way; but whether it be clothed in invective or epigram, the reader is always able to perceive its good sense and correctness. In a review of Madame d'Epinay's letters, he has combined truth and humor, in a very felicitous manner, in his statement of the morality of French society before the Revolution. "There used to be in Paris, under the ancient *régime*, a few women of brilliant talents, who violated all the common duties of life, and gave very pleasant little suppers. Among these supped and sinned Madame d'Epinay." He objects to the book, that it contains some improper and scandalous passages, which degrade the whole work. "But," he adds, "if all the decencies and delicacies of life were in one scale, and five francs in the other, what French bookseller would feel a single moment of doubt in making his election?" There are booksellers now who would not have the single moment of doubt, if the five francs were reduced to ninepence. In a review of a wretched translation of Madame de Staël's "Delphine," in 1802, Smith indulges in this strain of compliment respecting the book and its author: "This dismal trash, which has nearly dislocated the

jaws of every critic among us with gaping, has so alarmed Bonaparte, that he has seized the whole impression, sent Madame de Staël out of Paris, and, for aught we know, sleeps in a nightcap of steel, and dagger-proof blankets. To us it appears rather an attack upon the ten commandments than the government of Bonaparte; and calculated not so much to enforce the rights of the Bourbons, as the benefits of adultery, murder, and a great number of other vices." Further on he remarks, "The morality of all this is the old morality of Farquhar, Vanbrugh, and Congreve, — that every witty man may transgress the seventh commandment, which was never meant for the protection of husbands who labor under the incapacity of making repartees." We believe that this last stroke of wit contains the whole objection to the different schools of literary immorality. Pages would not add to its force or its pungency.

Smith has been a reformer, a sturdy and unflinching one. In his political discourses, he almost always considers a love of place, and not a love of man, as the predominating principle of his opponents. The prominence he gives to venality, as the source and sustenance of toryism, evinces the extremely practical view he is inclined to take of political disputes. If we assent to his statement, we must believe, that in England the most beneficial reforms, the overthrow of institutions the most absurd and pernicious, have been delayed during the last thirty years by extreme corruption combining with extreme folly. A pamphlet is published in defence of some old abuse; and Smith answers it by showing the income and rank which its author derives from the legalized system of plundering the public. His praise of Mr. Scarlett rests on the fact, that he has *not* "carried his

soul to the treasury, and said, What will you give me for this? He has never sold the warm feelings and honorable motives of his youth and manhood for an annual sum of money and an office; he has never taken a price for public liberty and public happiness; he has never touched the political Aceldama, and signed the devil's bond for cursing to-morrow what he has blest to-day." That is, Mr. Scarlett is not a scoundrel, and is accordingly to be eulogized. Again, according to Smith, the phrase, "God save the king," means, with too many loyalists, "God save my pension and my place, — God give my sisters an allowance out of the privy-purse, — make me clerk of the irons, let me survey the meltings, let me live upon the fruits of other men's industry, and fatten upon the plunder of the public." These words are bitter as well as brilliant, and show that Pennsylvania bonds are not the only iniquitous things in creation.

The love of justice, the hatred of cruelty, the lavish scorn and ridicule heaped upon bigotry and fraud, which characterize so many of these essays, are admirably displayed in the articles on Ireland and the Catholics, and in the celebrated "Peter Plymley's Letters." It has been well said, that Ireland should erect a monument to Smith's memory, for services in her cause. Taking the broad ground, that no man should be subjected to civil incapacities on account of his religious belief, he employs all methods to impress its correctness on the minds of governors. He represents the folly, the danger, the injustice and the sin, of refusing to the Catholics of Ireland their natural rights; he goes over the history of the country, to show the enormous crimes of the English in its misgovernment; he declaims in unmeasured terms

about the foolishness of suffering a large portion of the empire to be disbanded in sentiment from the other, merely to gratify the fanaticism and ignorance of the old women of the state; he uses threats, entreaties, sarcasms, the fiercest and most uncompromising denunciation, to make the exclusive policy appear detestable and ridiculous; and all this, without any regard to the injury it may do at the time to his own interest, and without any fear of the calumny, hatred, and petty persecution, it is calculated to provoke. Smith, also, delights in lashing the inconsistency of English philanthropy, for its love of the oppressed in other countries, and its love of oppression in its own land. "How wise," he exclaims, in 1827, "how wise, and how affecting, and how humane, are our efforts throughout Europe to put an end to the slave-trade! Wherever three or four negotiators are gathered together, a British *diplomate* appears among them with some article of kindness and pity for the poor negro. All is mercy and compassion, except when wretched Ireland is concerned. The saint who swoons at the lashes of the Indian slave is the encourager of No-Popery meetings, and the hard, bigoted, domineering tyrant of Ireland." "The chapter of English fraud," he says again, "comes next to the chapter of English cruelty, in the history of Ireland, and both are equally disgraceful." In arguing the question of Catholic emancipation, he lays great stress upon the probability that the Catholics will rise at some critical period of English affairs, (generally at the critical period in which he is writing,) and either force the government to yield them their rights, or, what is more likely, join themselves to France. Of course, John Bull's reply to this argumen is, that he will do nothing on compulsion, and that no

fear of any kind shall force him to yield one jot of his pretensions. Smith laughs at this bravado, and illustrates its consequences by a variety of historical allusions. "There was a period," he says, "when the slightest concession would have satisfied the Americans; but all the world was in heroics: one set of gentlemen met at the Lamb, and another at the Lion; blood-and-treasure men, breathing war, vengeance, and contempt; and in eight years afterwards, an awkward-looking gentleman, in plain clothes, walked up to the drawing-room of St. James's, in the midst of the gentlemen of the Lion and the Lamb, and was introduced as the *ambassador from the United States of America.*" To those politicians who averred, with some tumidity of diction, that Ireland was a millstone around the neck of England, he exclaims, — "Ireland a millstone round your neck! — why is it not a stone of Ajax in your hand?"

One of the great charms of these volumes is the wit displayed in the manner of stating common things. There is hardly a page which does not contain some humorous phrase or flash of fancy, in the highest degree felicitous. Many of these remind us of Dickens. The power of giving freshness to a trite remark, of breathing the breath of life into a dead truism, is eminently characteristic of Sydney Smith. Everything that comes from his mind seems to be original, even when it is old. He touches nothing without modifying its nature, or its accredited expression. Many examples might be given of this verbal felicity. He speaks of a great talker, as "a tremendous engine of colloquial oppression." The custom of giving the persons of a novel names suited to their characters, he terms "appellative jocularity." He refers to the habit of talking about the weather, as "the

train of meteorological questions and answers which form the staple of English polite conversation." And nothing can be finer than his description of the disadvantages of tropical climates, arising from animals and insects. "Every animal has his enemies; the land tortoise has two enemies, — man and the boa constrictor. Man takes him home and roasts him; and the boa constrictor swallows him whole, shell and all, and consumes him slowly in the interior, *as the Court of Chancery does a great estate.*" "Insects," he adds, a few sentences after, "are the curse of tropical climates. The *bête rouge* lays the foundation of a tremendous ulcer. In a moment you are covered with ticks. Chigoes bury themselves in your flesh, and hatch a large colony of young chigoes in a few hours. They will not live together, but every chigoe sets up a separate ulcer, and has his own private portion of pus. Flies get entry into your mouth, into your eyes, into your nose; you eat flies, drink flies, and breathe flies. Lizards, cockroaches and snakes, get into the bed; ants eat up the books; scorpions sting you on the foot. Everything bites, stings, and bruises; every second of your existence, you are wounded by some piece of animal life that nobody has ever seen before, except Swammerdam and Meriam. An insect with eleven legs is swimming in your tea-cup, a nondescript with nine wings is struggling in the small beer, or a caterpillar with several dozen eggs in his belly is hastening over the bread and butter. All nature is alive, and seems to be gathering all her entomological hosts to eat you up, as you are standing, out of your coat, waistcoat, and breeches. Such are the tropics. All this reconciles us to our dews, fogs, vapors and drizzle, — to our apothecaries rushing about with gargles

and tinctures, — to our old British constitutional coughs, sore throats, and swelled faces."

The delicacy of touch, the circuitous allusion, with which Smith refers to things commonly received as vulgar, is a study for all who wish to master the refinements of expression, and make them serve the purpose of the most grotesque humor. The Scotch Covenanters are referred to, in an argument against intolerance, in the most ludicrous of all heroic lights. After saying that the Percevals of those days were not able, by persecution and bloodshed, to prevent the Scotch, "that metaphysical people, from going to heaven their true way, instead of our true way," he immediately adds — "With a little oatmeal for food, and a little sulphur for friction, allaying *cutaneous* irritation with the one hand, and holding his Calvinistical creed in the other, Sawney ran away to the flinty hills, sung his psalm out of tune his own way, and listened to his sermon of two hours long, amid the rough and imposing melancholy of the tallest thistles."

In another connection, in arguing in favor of a good reform, he says, with much point and sagacity, "But now persecution is good, because it exists; every law which originated in ignorance and malice, and gratifies the passions from whence it sprang, we call the wisdom of our ancestors." Mr. Perceval is hit with much pungency by Peter Plymley, who wishes that he had tried the efficacy of a mode of reasoning used to exclude others from their just rights, "not by his understanding, but by (what are full of better things) his pockets." In the "First Letter to Archdeacon Singleton," he considers an objection to controversies in the bosom of the church, founded on the fear, that while the prebendaries

and bishops were quarrelling among themselves, the democrats would sweep them all away together. "Be it so," answers Smith. "Everybody has their favorite death; some delight in apoplexy, and others prefer marasmus. I would infinitely rather be crushed by democrats, than, under the plea of the public good, be mildly and blandly absorbed by bishops."

With one more extract, which we cannot resist copying, we will leave Smith's felicity of expression to take care of itself. It relates to bores, — a class of persons against whom he has as great a grudge as against Noodles. "Who punishes," he says, "the bore? What sessions and what assizes for him? What bill is found against him? Who indicts him? When the judges have gone their vernal and autumnal rounds, the sheep-stealer disappears, the swindler gets ready for the Bay, the solid parts of the murderer are preserved in anatomical collections. But, after twenty years of crime, the bore is discovered in the same house, in the same attitude, eating the same soup, — unpunished, untried, undissected; no scaffold, no skeleton, no mob of gentlemen and ladies to gape over his last dying speech and confession."

In the extracts we have made from Sydney Smith's writings, we think the characteristics of his mind and manner are sufficiently indicated, to enable our readers to judge of the man and his works. The fearlessness, the severity, the bluntness, the humor, which they evince, must be acknowledged to be of a rare and peculiar kind. It will be seen that, to be just to his compositions, we must view them always with reference to his personal character. Many things in his writings cannot be abstractly defended. He is sometimes too flippant, some-

times too dogmatical, sometimes too egotistic, and sometimes writes on subjects of which he knows little or nothing. He is often a little unjust to his adversaries, does not generally have enough respect for the feelings of others, and has too little hesitation in offending honest prejudices and errors. All these objections, and many more, could be brought against him; but they are objections which would be out of place. In considering such an author, our object should rather be to discover what he is, than to indicate what he is not. None of his foibles could be taken from him, without introducing discord into his character. The wonderful consistency of disposition which runs through his works, from the first sentence to the last, and the indissoluble connection of his opinions with his prejudices and virtues, enable all but the tenants of "Noodledom" to distinguish between the absolute and the relative truth of his writings, and to enjoy their humor and beauty at the same time that they may often doubt their correctness. To understand him, and to be charitable to him, we should remember, that he abandons the vantage-ground of authorship, and allows his readers to see him without any decorous disguise or show of dignity. In the case of other authors, we are compelled to infer their whole nature, or their real nature, by a tedious process of analysis and logic, built on some casual expressions in their compositions; and to wait until they die, before we can verify the correctness of the conclusion by the tone of their private letters. A good portion of criticism is devoted to the task of discovering what an author really is, and of aiming to unfold the bad tendencies of seemingly good opinions. In Sydney Smith's works, we have more than the honesty of private letters.

and a carelessness of all appearances, like that of a man conversing at his own fireside.

It has been remarked, that the four most extravagant humorists in modern times, Rabelais, Scarron, Swift, and Sterne, were priests. To this body may be added Sydney Smith; though we think his nature altogether of a finer quality than that of either of the others, and placed in circumstances better adapted to its development, without outraging decency and morals. When we consider the apparent recklessness of his wit and humor, and the little restraint he places on his whims, it is remarkable that his writings are so pure in their moral tendency, and contain so much genial and generous feeling.

We cannot close this paper without expressing our regret that Sydney Smith lost money by his investments in American funds, and that he wrote his "Letters on American Debts." A man of such honesty, a man who has been so delightful a companion to thousands who have never seen his face, must find ready sympathy in any pecuniary loss that he may suffer, especially when the loss is a reduction from the gains of literary compositions, full of cordial humor and inimitable wit. A man, likewise, who has established a character for shrewdness, and who has rarely fallen in with the follies consequent upon excited feeling, should have the condolence of all his friends, when he blunders in management, and, impelled by the fanaticism of the purse, rushes himself into the Noodleism he has spent a life in ridiculing.

Indeed, the conduct of Smith and others, in regard to American debts, resembles strongly the conduct of England before the American war, as it has been so felicitously described by Peter Plymley. As soon as the intelligence arrived of the defalcation of a few States, "all the world

went into heroics" again. Gentlemen met at the Board of Brokers, and grew financially furious on their wrongs. Persons, famous for making nice distinctions, expressed their incompetency to see the difference between the debts of the State of New York and the State of Illinois. Editors, both of tory and radical politics, were directed to be equally undiscriminating, and to scatter the whole wealth of their vocabulary of slander on America. The most atrocious misrepresentations, the hardiest falsehoods, the silliest libels, were affirmed with the utmost confidence, and believed with the utmost credulity. A crusade was threatened against our manners, our society, our institutions, our literature, and our people. Persons who were taxed to pay the debt of their own State, taxed to pay the debt of the general government, taxed to pay the debt of their own city, were to be outlawed as robbers and defaulters, because they were not taxed to pay the debts of other States, for whose obligations they were no more responsible than for those of the government of Great Britain. The very holders of American stocks seemed to contribute their efforts to dishonor them. The bankers would not touch the United States six *per cent.* loan at par; and all means were tried to depress the securities of the solvent States. But, by and by, our rates of interest fell from six to five, to four and a half, to three and a half, *per cent.* Money was abundant in almost every portion of the Union. Stocks rose fifteen or twenty *per cent.* While curses against our insolvency were ringing on the London Exchange, while holders of State bonds were decrying their own property, many astute American brokers bought the worthless obligations at a large discount, and sold them to our own capitalists for permanent investment. Many

millions of the United States loan, which would not sell at par in London, were sold, some months after, to our own capitalists, at rates of premium steadily advancing from five to fifteen *per cent.* The stocks in London which "dragged" at eighty-seven, soon rose here to one hundred and four and one hundred and eight. And all this was owing to the fact, that in England it was very difficult to discriminate between States who paid the interest on their bonds, and States who paid it not; while, in this country, it was the simplest matter in the world, to any person of common understanding.

Now, our regret is, that a man like Sydney Smith should have chimed in with this popular clamor, and joined a set of persons whom he has all his life stigmatized as "Noodles." Old Mr. Weller's astonishment, when he heard that his acute son Samuel had been deceived by the weeping rogue in green, was not comparable to ours when we read the "Letters." From that production we should derive the idea, that all the rascality and folly of the world were included in the United States, — that Mr. Perceval and Mr. Canning had never governed Great Britain, – that Peter Plymley had written no letters, — that there was no country called Ireland, — and that no English politicians had been in the habit of "touching the political Aceldama, and signing the devil's bond for cursing to-morrow what they have blest to-day." We are sorry, we repeat, that Sydney Smith's weakness should have led him to publish so rash a pamphlet; and, we are grieved, that, in a moment of petulance, he sold his bonds at a loss. A little patience, and he might have made, to say the least, a better bargain. The peculiar description of American debt which was held by him has risen much of late, and we trust

that it will soon be good for its nominal value. However, if he should chance to doubt his "Tunis three per cents," and desire to make a durable investment in securities of undoubted worth, and yet not wish to make another trial of Pennsylvania, we can conscientiously advise him to purchase, among other very valuable and unblemished American stocks, those which go under the name of Massachusetts Fives and New York Sixes.

DANIEL WEBSTER.*

The verbal honors of literature in this country are lavished with a free hand. The mind of the nation is held responsible for all the mediocrity which rushes into print. Every thin poetaster, who wails or warbles in a sentimental magazine, is dignified with the title of an American author, and is duly paraded in biographical dictionaries and "specimens" of native poets. Literary reputations are manufactured for the smallest consideration, and in the easiest of all methods. A *clique* of sentimentalists, for example, find a young dyspeptic poet, and think they see in his murmurings a mirror which reflects the "mysteries" of our nature. Two or three excitable patriots are in ecstasies at discovering a national writer, when they bring forward some scribbler who repeats the truisms of our politics, or echoes the slang of our elections. This nonsense, it must be admitted, is not peculiar to this country, but is now practised in most civilized communities. In England, a poem by Mr. Robert Montgomery passed through eleven editions, attaining a greater circulation in a year or two, than the writings of Wordsworth had obtained in twenty. The

* Speeches and Forensic Arguments. By Daniel Webster. Boston: Tappan and Dennet, 1830—1843. 3 vols. 8vo. — *North American Review, July*, 1844.

art of puffing — an art which has succeeded in consummating the divorce between words and ideas — is the method employed on both sides of the Atlantic for effecting this exaltation of mediocrity.

Now we deny that the swarm of writers to whom we have adverted are to be considered as the representatives of the national mind, or that their productions are to be deemed a permanent part of our national literature. A great portion of the intellectual and moral energy of the nation is engaged in active life. Those who most clearly reflect the spirit of our institutions are those who are not writers by profession. If we were to make a list of American authors, a list which should comprehend only such as were animated by an American spirit, we should pass over the contributors to the magazines, and select men who lead representative assemblies, or contend for vast schemes of reform. We should attempt to find those who were engaged in some great practical work, who were applying large powers and attainments to the exigencies of the times, who were stirred by noble impulses, and were laboring to compass great ends. The thoughts and feelings, which spring warm from the hearts and minds of such men, in such positions, would be likely to possess a grandeur and elevation, before which the mere trifling of amateurs in letters would sink into ridiculous littleness.

Believing thus, that our national literature is to be found in the records of our greatest minds, and is not confined to the poems, novels and essays, which may be produced by Americans, we have been surprised that the name of Daniel Webster is not placed high among American authors. Men in every way inferior to him in mental power have obtained a wide reputation for *writ-*

ing works in every way inferior to those *spoken* by him. It cannot be, that a generation like ours, continually boasting that it is not misled by forms, should think that thought changes its character, when it is published from the mouth instead of the press. Still, it is true, that a man who has acquired fame as an orator and statesman is rarely considered, even by his own partisans, in the light of an author. He is responsible for no "book." The records of what he has said and done, though perhaps constantly studied by contemporaries, are not generally regarded as part and parcel of the national literature. The fame of the man of action overshadows that of the author. We are so accustomed to consider him as a speaker, that we are somewhat blind to the great literary merit of his speeches. The celebrated argument in reply to Hayne, for instance, was intended by the statesman as a defence of his political position, as an exposition of constitutional law, and a vindication of what he deemed to be the true policy of the country. The acquisition of merely literary reputation had no part in the motives from which it sprung. Yet the speech, even to those who take little interest in subjects like the tariff, nullification, and the public lands, will ever be interesting, from its profound knowledge, its clear arrangement, the mastery it exhibits of all the weapons of dialectics, the broad stamp of nationality it bears, and the wit, sarcasm, and splendid and impassioned eloquence, which pervade and vivify, without interrupting, the close and rapid march of the argument.

Considered merely as literary productions, therefore, we think the three volumes of "Speeches and Forensic Arguments," quoted at the head of this article, take the highest rank among the best productions of the American

intellect. They are thoroughly national in their spirit and tone, and are full of principles, arguments, and appeals, which come directly home to the hearts and understandings of the great body of the people. They contain the results of a long life of mental labor, employed in the service of the country. They give evidence of a complete familiarity with the spirit and workings of our institutions, and breathe the bracing air of a healthy and invigorating patriotism. They are replete with that true wisdom which is slowly gathered from the exercise of a strong and comprehensive intellect on the complicated concerns of daily life and duty. They display qualities of mind and style which would give them a high place in any literature, even if the subjects discussed were less interesting and important; and they show also a strength of personal character, superior to irresolution and fear, capable of bearing up against the most determined opposition, and uniting to boldness in thought intrepidity in action. In all the characteristics of great literary performances, they are fully equal to many works which have stood the test of age, and baffled the skill of criticism. Still, though read and quoted by everybody, though continually appealed to as authorities, though considered as the products of the most capacious understanding in the country, few seem inclined to consider the high rank they hold in our literature, or their claim to be placed among the greatest works which the human intellect has produced during the last fifty years.

If the mind of Mr. Webster were embodied in any other form than speeches and orations, this strange oversight would never be committed; but the branch of literature to which his works belong has been much degraded by the nonsense and bombast of declaimers

and sophists. It is edifying to read some of the "thrilling" addresses, which have "enchained the attention" of thousands, were it only to observe what tasteless word-piling passes with many for eloquence. Thought and expression, in these examples, are supplanted by the lungs and the dictionary. A man who is to address a crowd or a jury deems it necessary that a portion of his speech should be imaginative and passionate; and, accordingly, he painfully elaborates a mass of worn and wasted verbiage into a style senselessly extravagant or coldly turgid. The success with which he practises this deception emboldens him to continue his rhetorical foolery, and he soon obtains a reputation for affluence of fancy and warmth of feeling. A vast number of examples of detestable bad taste might be selected from the orations of eminent men, who have fallen into this style, and labored to make their eloquence "tell" upon the "masses." In these examples, we are not more struck by the poverty of thought than the poverty of feeling and invention. We find that the fine raiment of the orator is the mere cast-off clothes of the poet, — that he mistakes vulgarity for graceful ease, — that his images are bloated, coarse, and flaring, — and that he has all the meanness of mediocrity, without its simplicity of language. Amidst all the tasteless splendor and labored frenzy of his diction, we can hardly discover one genuine burst of feeling.

The speeches of Daniel Webster are in admirable contrast with the kind of oratory we have indicated. They have a value and interest apart from the time and occasion of their delivery, for they are store-houses of thought and knowledge. The speaker descends to no rhetorical tricks and shifts, he indulges in no parade

of ornament. A self-sustained intellectual might is impressed on every page. He rarely confounds the processes of reason and imagination, even in those popular discourses intended to operate on large assemblies. He betrays no appetite for applause, no desire to win attention by the brisk life and momentary sparkle of flashing declamation. Earnestness, solidity of judgment, elevation of sentiment, broad and generous views of national policy, and a massive strength of expression, characterize all his works. We feel, in reading them, that he is a man of principles, not a man of expedients; that he never adopts opinions without subjecting them to stern tests; and that he recedes from them only at the bidding of reason and experience. He never seems to be playing a part, but always acting a life.

The ponderous strength of his powers strikes us not more forcibly than the broad individuality of the man. Were we unacquainted with the history of his life, we could almost infer it from his works. Everything in his productions indicates the character of a person who has struggled fiercely against obstacles, who has developed his faculties by strenuous labor, who has been a keen and active observer of man and nature, and who has been disciplined in the affairs of the world. There is a manly simplicity and clearness in his mind, and a rugged energy in his feelings, which preserve him from all the affectations of literature and society. He is great by original constitution. What nature originally gave to him, nature has to some extent developed, strengthened, and stamped with her own signature. We never consider him as a mere debater, a mere scholar, or a mere statesman; but as a strong, sturdy, earnest man. The school and the college could not fashion him into any

foreign shape, because they worked on materials too hard to yield easily to conventional moulds.

The impression of power we obtain from Webster's productions, — a power not merely of the brain, but of the heart and physical temperament, a power resulting from the mental and bodily constitution of the whole man, — is the source of his hold upon our respect and admiration. We feel that, under any circumstances, in any condition of social life, and at almost any period of time, his great capacity would have been felt and acknowledged. He does not appear, like many eminent men, to be more peculiarly calculated for his own age than for any other, — to possess faculties and dispositions which might have rusted in obscurity, had circumstances been less propitious. We are sure that, as an old baron of the feudal time, as an early settler of New England, as a pioneer in the western forests, he would have been a Warwick, a Standish, or a Boon. His childhood was passed in a small country village, where the means of education were scanty, and at a period when the country was rent with civil dissensions. A large majority of those who are called educated men have been surrounded by all the implements and processes of instruction; but Webster won his education by battling against difficulties. "A dwarf behind a steam-engine can remove mountains; but no dwarf can hew them down with a pick-axe, and he must be a Titan that hurls them abroad with his arms." Every step in that long journey, by which the son of the New Hampshire farmer has obtained the highest rank in social and political life, has been one of strenuous effort. The space is crowded with incidents, and tells of obstacles sturdily met and fairly overthrown. His life and his writings seem to bear testimony, that he

can perform whatever he strenuously attempts. His words never seem disproportioned to his strength. Indeed, he rather gives the impression that he has powers and impulses in reserve, to be employed when the occasion for their exercise may arise. In many of his speeches, not especially pervaded by passion, we perceive strength, indeed, but strength "half-leaning on his own right arm." He has never yet been placed in circumstances where the full might of his nature, in all its depth of understanding, fiery vehemence of sensibility, and adamantine strength of will, have been brought to bear on any one object, and strained to their utmost.

We have referred to Webster's productions as being eminently national. Every one familiar with them will bear out the statement. In fact, the most hurried glance at his life would prove, that, surrounded as he has been from his youth by American influences, it could hardly be otherwise. His earliest recollections must extend nearly to the feelings and incidents of the Revolution. His whole life since that period has been passed in the country of his birth, and his fame and honors are all closely connected with American feelings and institutions. His works all refer to the history, the policy, the laws, the government, the social life, and the destiny, of his own land. They bear little resemblance, in their tone and spirit, to productions of the same class on the other side of the Atlantic. They have come from the heart and understanding of one into whose very nature the life of his country has passed. Without taking into view the influences to which his youth and early manhood were subjected, so well calculated to inspire a love for the very soil of his nativity, and to mould his mind into accordance with what is best and noblest in the

spirit of our institutions, his position has been such as to lead him to survey objects from an American point of view. His patriotism has become part of his being. Deny him that, and you deny the authorship of his works. It has prompted the most majestic flights of his eloquence. It has given intensity to his purposes, and lent the richest glow to his genius. It has made his eloquence a language of the heart, felt and understood over every portion of the land it consecrates. On Plymouth Rock, on Bunker's Hill, at Mount Vernon, by the tombs of Hamilton, and Adams, and Jefferson, and Jay, we are reminded of Daniel Webster. He has done what no national poet has yet succeeded in doing, — associated his own great genius with all in our country's history and scenery which makes us rejoice that we are Americans. Over all those events in our history which are heroical, he has cast the hues of strong feeling and vivid imagination. He cannot stand on one spot of ground, hallowed by liberty or religion, without being kindled by the genius of the place; he cannot mention a name, consecrated by self-devotion and patriotism, without doing it eloquent homage. Seeing clearly, and feeling deeply, he makes us see and feel with him. That scene of the landing of the Pilgrims, in which his imagination conjures up the forms and emotions of our New England ancestry, will ever live in the national memory. We see, with him, the "little bark, with the interesting group on its deck, make its slow progress to the shore." We feel, with him, "the cold which benumbed," and listen, with him, "to the winds which pierced them." Carver, and Bradford, and Standish, and Brewster, and Allerton, look out upon us from the pictured page, in all the dignity with which virtue and freedom invest their martyrs·

and we see, too, "chilled and shivering childhood, houseless but for a mother's arms, couchless but for a mother's breast," till our own blood almost freezes.

The readiness with which the orator compels our sympathies to follow his own is again illustrated in the orations at Bunker Hill, and in the discourse in honor of Adams and Jefferson. In reading them, we feel a new pride in our country, and in the great men and great principles it has cherished. The mind feels an unwonted elevation, and the heart is stirred with emotions of more than common depth, by their majesty and power. Some passages are so graphic and true that they seem gifted with a voice, and to speak to us from the page they illumine. The intensity of feeling with which they are pervaded rises at times from confident hope to prophecy, and lifts the soul as with wings. In that splendid close to a remarkable passage in the oration on Adams and Jefferson, what American does not feel assured, with the orator, that their fame will be immortal? "Although no sculptured marble should rise to their memory, nor engraved stone bear record to their deeds, yet will their remembrance be as lasting as the land they honored. Marble columns may, indeed, moulder into dust, time may erase all impress from the crumbling stone, but their fame remains; for with AMERICAN LIBERTY it rose, and with AMERICAN LIBERTY ONLY can it perish. It was the last swelling peal of yonder choir, 'THEIR BODIES ARE BURIED IN PEACE, BUT THEIR NAME LIVETH EVERMORE.' I catch the solemn song, I echo that lofty strain of funeral triumph, 'THEIR NAME LIVETH EVERMORE.'"

Throughout the speeches of Mr. Webster we perceive this national spirit. He has meditated so deeply on the

history, the formation, and the tendencies of our institutions; he is so well acquainted with the conduct and opinions of every statesman who has affected the policy of the government; and has become so thoroughly imbued with the national character, that his sympathies naturally flow in national channels, and have their end and object in the land of his birth and culture. His motto is, "Our country, our whole country, and nothing but our country." It is the alpha and omega of his political alphabet. It is felt in his blood, and "felt along his heart." It is twined with all his early recollections, with the acts of his life, with his hopes, his ambition, and his fame. Strike it from his works, and what remains?

We do not mean that Webster's patriotism, as displayed in his speeches, is a blind, unintelligent impulse, leading him into fanaticism, and inspiring a rash confidence in everything American. He has none of that overweening conceit, that spirit of bravado, that ignorant contempt for other countries, that undiscerning worship of his own, which have done so much to make patriotism a convertible term for cant or folly. His opinions belong not to the same class with those which are "equivocally generated by the heat of fervid tempers out of the overflowings of tumid imaginations." He goes deeper than declamation, when his country is his theme. He is too profound a student of government and human nature to indulge in "Fourth of July orations." In nothing is his love of country more manifest than in the sense he has of its dangers. His voice is raised to warn as well as to animate. A warm enthusiasm for popular rights is often accompanied by recklessness in the use of means; and mere mouthing, in such instances, is so apt to be con-

ounded with eloquent patriotism, that a man who breasts he flood, instead of being whirled along with it, subjects imself to the charge of opposing the cause of humanity nd freedom. His firmness at such periods is the test f his patriotism. Forms are liable to be overthrown nd trampled under foot, in the march of a victorious arty, flushed with warm anticipations and mad with eal. In every free community, there are many whose uick sensibilities would lead them at any moment to arter the slow gatherings of years of experience for one nad plunge into untried experiment. In nothing is the tatesmanship of Mr. Webster better displayed than in he strength with which he combats fanciful theories of mpracticable reforms, and the sturdiness with which he ntrenches himself in principles which have stood the est of experience. His patriotism "looks before and fter." He would defend what liberty we possess from he impetuosity of those who are clamorous for more. All encroachments of power on right and precedent, for vhatever purpose they may be designed, he resists with he full force of his nature. His notion of the duty of a epresentative of the people, and the cautious jealousy vith which he would view the slightest attack upon stablished declarations and safeguards, may be gleaned rom his speech on the President's Protest. "We have een taught," he says, "to regard a representative of the eople as a sentinel on the watch-tower of liberty. Is he o be blind, though visible danger approaches? Is he to e deaf, though sounds of peril fill the air? Is he to be umb while a thousand duties impel him to raise the ry of alarm? Is he not, rather, to catch the lowest vhisper which breathes intention or purpose of encroach-ent on the public liberties, and to give his voice breath

and utterance at the first appearance of danger? Is not his eye to traverse the whole horizon, with the keen and eager vision of an unhooded hawk, detecting, through all disguises, every enemy advancing, in any form, towards the citadel he guards?"

Again he says: — "The spirit of liberty is, indeed, a bold and fearless spirit; but it is also a sharp-sighted spirit; it is a cautious, sagacious, discriminating, far-seeing intelligence; it is jealous of encroachment, jealous of power, jealous of man. It demands checks; it seeks for guards; it insists on securities; it intrenches itself behind strong defences, and fortifies, with all possible care, against the assaults of ambition and passion."

Sentiments similar to these are found in all portions of his political discourses. They have nothing in common with that shrinking timidity of conservatism, which fears everything new, for the reason that it is new; but they evince the profound knowledge and wisdom of one whose studies and experience have led him to look for theories of free government in other sources than the imagination and sensibility; of one who knows when it is proper to watch the approach of enemies, and when to march to the attack of abuses; and of one who is aware that patriotism and courage are as often displayed in resisting the impulses of the time, as in being borne forward on their fiery course. The mind of Mr. Webster is eminently comprehensive, and fitted for large speculations. Its range is so wide, that there is little danger of its being fixed permanently on one department of thought, to the exclusion of others. It is not a mere reasoning machine. It is neither misled by its own subtilty, nor bewildered by the fallacies of the feelings. It is rather telescopic than microscopic, — more conversant

with great principles than minute distinctions. In his speeches, we are struck more by the general mental power they display, than by the preponderance of any particular faculty. Through them all we perceive the movement of an intellect strong enough to grapple with any subject, and capacious enough to comprehend it, both in itself and in its relations. Force and clearness of conception, exact analysis, skilful arrangement, a sharp logical ability, and a keen insight, "outrunning the deductions of logic," indicate a mind well calculated for the investigation of truth and the detection of error; a mind capable of testing the validity of principles by the usual processes of reasoning, and of penetrating through all the heavy panoply of argument in which falsehood is often concealed. His common sense, a quality which does not always accompany mental power, is as prominent as his dialectical skill. Folly, assumption, fallacy, however cunningly hid in metaphor or formula, cannot stand for one moment the piercing glance of his intellect. He seems to have a feeling and sense of the false and baseless, as well as the capacity to expose it by logical methods. He tears away the labored defences of a sophism, and exhibits it to the light in its native littleness and deformity; or, perhaps, in the consciousness and plenitude of power, he will play with it a while, and make it the butt of sarcastic trifling, and cluster around it all the phrases and images of contempt, and then spurn it from his path as a thing too mean even for scorn.

His understanding embraces the whole extent of a subject, methodizes its complicated details, discerns its general laws and their remote applications, and exhibits the whole to view with a clearness of arrangement which renders it perceptible to the simplest apprehension. As

a reasoner, he has hardly an equal among his countrymen, either in the sharp, swift, close argumentation of vehement debate, or in the calm survey and powerful combination of facts and principles. Some may excel him in the discussion of abstract questions, — questions which rather require fineness than depth or reach of thought, and which have no immediate relation to practical life; but none, in that large inductive method, which comprehends all the facts that lead to general laws, and modifies all general laws when used as principles of action. He is also powerful in reasoning *à priori*, if the term be admissible, — of applying universal principles of reason or morals to particular cases, and forcing the mind into assent to their application; which is, perhaps, a greater sign of genius, than slowly travelling up the ladder of induction, and arriving at a general law by successive steps: but in these, the deductive processes of his intellect, he never becomes a reasoning fanatic, pushing one idea to its remotest results, without regard to its limitations.

Many examples might be selected, in illustration of his felicitous use of great sentiments and universal ideas, in elucidating a question of national policy or constitutional law. We believe, that the power to grasp, and rightly to employ, these ideas and sentiments, constitutes the difference between a great reasoner and a mere subtile logician. It is certain, that skill in dialectics is more an art than an effort of genius. The merit of picking flaws in an argument is about on a par with the ability displayed by young rhetoricians, fresh from Blair, in detecting faults in the sentences of Addison and Burke. It is merely a knack. Many a young lawyer at the bar has nearly as much of it as can be found in

Chillingworth or Butler. It is little better than quibbling, and is within the reach of any who have sufficient ingenuity to make a pun. Constantly practised, it vitiates and narrows the mind, and renders it sceptical on trifles, only to make it dogmatic on things of importance. At all events, it cannot be called force of thought, and is altogether unfitted for the discussion of great practical questions.

The power of Mr. Webster's mind is seen to greatest advantage when employed on questions relating to universal truths in morals, in government, and in religion. He then displays a grandeur and elevation of thought, a confidence in the permanence of principle, a freedom from the technicalities of the lawyer and politician, and a ponderous might of expression, which convey a stronger impression of the essential greatness of the man, than his most celebrated triumphs over personal adversaries, and his most overpowering declamation in debate. In these examples there is a union of calmness and energy, a grave, severe, determined, almost oracular, enunciation of lofty truths, and a trust in the eventual triumph of the eternal principles of justice and equity, before which all the subtle speculation of the sophist, and all the philosophy of the worldling, appear tame and debasing. This grandeur of moral tone, accompanying the most daring exercise of the understanding, and giving to abstractions a power to thrill the blood and kindle the noblest affections, — this soaring of the soul above the common maxims which regulate existence, and bringing down wisdom from on high to shame authority into acquiescence, is the more remarkable as coming from a practical statesman, whose life for thirty years has been passed in the turmoil of politics. That

a man exposed to such influences should preserve steady faith in ideas and principles, should rise continually above the question and policy of the hour, should accustom his intellect to the contemplation of eternal truths, must appear an anomaly to a large majority of politicians. Perhaps, if they would reflect more deeply on the matter, they would discover, that even in political life, more real confidence is reposed in a man of this stability and grasp of intellect, and force of moral principle, than in the cunning trimmer, who shifts his ground with every change of national feeling, who relies for favor on giving a brilliant echo to every shout of the multitude, and who keeps faith with nothing but his selfish interest or his ravenous vanity.

In that noble burst of eloquence, in the speech on the Greek Revolution, in which he asserts the power of the moral sense of the world, in checking the dominion of brute force, and rendering insecure the spoils of successful oppression, we have a strong instance of his reliance on the triumph of right over might.

"This public opinion of the civilized world," he says, "may be silenced by military power, but it cannot be conquered. It is elastic, irrepressible, and invulnerable to the weapons of ordinary power. It follows the conqueror back to the very scene of his ovations; it calls upon him to take notice, that Europe, though silent, is yet indignant; it shows him, that the sceptre of his victory is a barren sceptre, that it shall confer neither joy nor honor, but shall moulder to dry ashes in his grasp. In the midst of his exultation, it pierces his ear with the cry of injured justice, it denounces against him the indignation of an enlightened and civilized age; it turns to bitterness the cup of his rejoicing, and wounds him with the sting which belongs to the consciousness of having outraged the opinion of mankind."

The most splendid image to be found in any of his works closes a passage in which he attempts to prove that our fathers accomplished the Revolution on a strict question of principle.

"It was against the recital of an act of parliament, rather than against any suffering under its enactments, that they took up arms. *They went to war against a preamble!* They fought seven years against a declaration. They poured out their treasures and their blood like water, in a contest in opposition to an assertion, which those less sagacious, and not so well schooled in the principles of civil liberty, *would have regarded as barren phraseology, or mere parade of words.* . . . . On this question of principle, while actual suffering was yet afar off, they raised their flag against a power, to which, for purposes of foreign conquest and subjugation, Rome, in the height of her glory, is not to be compared, — a power which has dotted over the surface of the whole globe with her possessions and military posts, whose morning drum-beat, following the sun, and keeping company with the hours, circles the earth daily with one continuous and unbroken strain of the martial airs of England."

This passage is worthy the attention of those who think that Mr. Webster is too practical in his system of politics to allow his mind to be swayed by any great general ideas and principles. It would not be difficult to select other passages displaying an equally firm faith in the supremacy of truth and right. The jealous eye with which he watches the smallest encroachments on established safeguards of liberty, is another illustration of his habit of looking at the principles and tendencies of things, rather than at their specious shows. In truth, in all questions relating to life and duty, whether the mind declares what *may* be or what *must* be, whether it declares probabilities or certainties, his understanding is never found deficient in insight or comprehension.

To this power of intellect, thus capable of such various exercise, and restrained from sophistical aberrations by such strength of moral sentiment, it is owing, that Mr. Webster's speeches have that character of solidity which has been so often acknowledged and so loudly praised. There is substance and body in them. They do not crush in the hand, like so many refined reasonings and so much declamatory rhetoric. They are, in some respects, authorities on the subjects of which they treat. In them a person is enabled to obtain a view of the different political theories and practices which divide the nation into parties, without any of the extravagance and perversions of the mere advocate and partisan. Holding on to his own principles with a grasp of iron, despising all shifts to accommodate them to popular prejudice, and expressing them with a force derived from his whole nature, he still never indulges in the ranting subterfuges of the one-sided politician, and is no spendthrift of invective in opposing the champions of different measures. If the stern, rapid argument of his speeches be compared, or rather contrasted, with the fanatical fury which disgraces so many political discourses, delivered by men of both parties, the distinction we desire to make will be more clearly observed than by any description it is in our power to give.

We have incidentally seen, in these remarks, that the sensibility of Mr. Webster, though not dominant, is deep and strong. No American writer has more fire in his productions. His passions, when roused, seem to pervade his intellect, and give it additional clearness and power. The same impulses which blind, confuse, or madden others, and lead them astray from their objects,

only affect him by giving a quicker spring to his style, and more intensity and vehemence to his reasoning. His sensibility is not the master, but the ally, of his understanding. It never forces his mind into passionate fallacies, nor substitutes declamation for argument; but it sharpens his insight, it condenses and vivifies his diction, and infuses into his "ponderous syllables" a fiery energy, by which they smite their objects with an overpowering effect. The fact that there is such a mass of intellectual power behind his sensibility, to fix, condense, and direct its mighty impulses, confers upon it greater potency than if it swept along with more uncontrolled fierceness, and prompted more daring flights. It addresses the heart and the understanding at the same moment. It forces the mind directly along the path of clear reasoning to the object in view. It is argument, but argument gifted with muscular life and energy; it is reason, but "reason penetrated, and made, as it were, red-hot with passion."

There are occasions when Mr. Webster's sensibility is less under his control,—when it gives out scorn and denunciation,

> "As the rock
> Gives out the reddening, roaring fire;"

but generally it is exercised in the service of reason. When attacked, he has his faculties most under the guidance of his judgment, and deals back blow for blow with ten-fold force, from being able to concentrate his powers. There is a provoking condescension, even in his wrath, which must be more galling to an adversary than the most ungovernable outbreak of rage and invective. Passion, to a debater, is the most useful of

servants and the most tyrannical of masters. When it leads to shrewishness, or petulance, or wild sophistries, or malignant hatred, it vitiates the intellect and enfeebles the judgment. Statesmen and orators who have mingled much in the warfare of debate have rarely preserved a due medium between fury and *nonchalance*. The strong understanding of Edmund Burke was not proof against the delusions of his feelings. It has been said of him, that he chose his position like a fanatic, and defended it like a philosopher. We sometimes find in his writings an almost gigantic power of reasoning, exercised to defend an unreasonable prejudice; and an exhaustless fertility of fancy, employed to adorn a rotten institution. In the fierce sway which his sensibility sometimes obtained over his other powers, his dignity and self-possession were often lost; and he directed some of the most potent efforts of his genius against those self-evident truths which no dialectical skill can overthrow. Lord Brougham's large acquirements and high position do not preserve him from the servitude of petulance and rage. Many of his later speeches are the offspring of excitement and whim, valuable chiefly to show that the mere scolding of a great man is not without its eloquence.

We have referred to the strength of personal character which the productions of Mr. Webster evince. This, we think, is to be attributed, in a great degree, to the depth and intensity of his feelings, and especially to his passions. Mental power, alone, could not have sustained him in the many emergencies of his political position. No one can read his works without being struck with the stout courage, both moral and physical, with which they are animated. He never seems touched with fear

or irresolution. The hall of debate is not so dangerous, to be sure, as the field of battle; but we can conceive of valor which would brave the cannon's mouth, and yet shrink from the trials and responsibilities of political warfare. Not only is a man obliged to repel personal attack, but character, station, and influence, are perilled by the speech or the decision of the moment. A mere passionate partisan, whose insignificance is his shield from the scorn of posterity, can ill appreciate the responsibility which presses on the heart of the great statesman. The latter is acting in the very eye of history; indeed, he is living history. His vote and his opinions are to be remembered against him, if they support a pernicious law, or spring from ignorance or excitement. His advocacy or denunciation of a measure is to affect for evil or good the condition of millions. His conscience, his patriotism, all the conservative principles of his nature, though they would impel him to act and speak for the right, are liable to perplex his determinations, if they are not based on clear conceptions of the subject. With posterity and its inevitable verdict before him, and a clamorous party, urging him to do every thing unreasonable, at his back, he is forced to come to a decision, and maintain it with his whole power. To do this requires courage and resolution. Now, if we examine Mr. Webster's speeches, we find that they display no disposition to shrink from the consequences of his conduct, no evasion of responsibility, no expressions studiously framed to bear two interpretations, but a plain, sturdy, unflinching expression of judgment, fortified by clear arguments, and ever ready to be tried by the result. This intellectual hardihood, unaffected by sceptical distrust, and daring the verdict of the present

and the future, must be deemed a great quality by a capable of appreciating it. If the measure supported be evil, he is to suffer from one of two imputations. If his conduct sprung from ignorance or rashness, it is folly; if it sprung from selfishness, it is crime. In view of this fact, a little timidity is excusable in a statesman placed in a prominent station, whose opinions are axioms to great parties, and who is surrounded by partisans and enemies, while all his acts and words are scrutinized with the sharp analysis of malice and hatred; and it requires the rare union of a piercing and comprehensive intellect with great force of character, to enable a man to act, in such a position, with wisdom, boldness, and decision.

Much has been said and written in praise of Mr. Webster's imagination, often, we think, from overlooking the claims of his understanding and sensibility. A careful examination of his works will lead us to speak more guardedly of the degree in which he possesses this faculty. We think that loftiness of sentiment, reach of thought, and depth of passion, are more apparent than affluence of imagery. Imagination, however, is a word so loosely employed, that, in the common meaning of the term, it would be no compliment to apply it to any man of large intellect. The same term which is applied to the most marked characteristic of Shakspeare's "Tempest," is indiscriminately used in speaking of some florid oration, or some wild nonsense of passion. A poem is published, teeming with absurdities, and full of confused rant and bloated metaphors, and its faults are ascribed to an excess of imagination. A speaker indulges in the wildest vagaries of sentimentality,—talks about the stars the ocean, the progress of the species, and jumbles them

all up in one series of worthless figures; and sensible people call him a fool, but a fool by virtue of his strong imagination. Flowery and feeble declaimers — writers like the Rev. Mr. Hervey, orators like Counsellor Phillips — are accused of possessing imagination. Thus a term, which, more than any other in the vocabulary of criticism, requires to be employed cautiously and with qualifications, is made a convenient word to cover the feebleness of a critic's insight and the clumsiness of his analysis.

The imagination, "the vision and the faculty divine," is by no means predominant in Mr. Webster's mind. With him, it is not a spontaneous, shaping power, but acts chiefly at the direction of reason and feeling, and is most fruitful when his intellect is most active in its operations. Many of its analogies may be referred to the reason. The images which it calls up are generally broad, distinct, and vivid, speaking directly to the eye, and informed with the feeling of the moment; but it has little of that subtile influence which touches minute shades of feeling, suggests remote analogies, sheds ineffable beauty over the common realities of life, detects the latent spiritual meaning beneath rough forms, and combines things seemingly different into one consistent whole. Its power bears little comparison with the power of the understanding which directs it, — an understanding which often dives deeper and soars higher than his imagination, with the disadvantage of acting under more laborious processes. In some of his most splendid efforts, his imagination works rather by allusion than creation; by vivifying and applying old images and forms of expression, than by originating new. Throughout the speech in reply to Hayne, there is a constant reference to figures

and phrases which are in the memories of all who have studied Milton, Shakspeare, and the Bible. Though suggested and applied to his own purposes by the imagination, and wonderfully felicitous in their introduction, they still receive their great effect from the spirit and feeling with which they are pervaded. Indeed, if Mr. Webster's invention were equal to his understanding, he would be a poet before whose genius the brightest names in our literature would "pale their ineffectual fires." The mere fact that his imagination is subsidiary to his reasoning powers, and that its products are not esteemed of equal value, proves that it is relatively inferior.

The imagination of Mr. Webster, if not that of a poet, is eminently the imagination which befits an orator and debater. A statesman, who is to present his views on a question of national policy in lucid order, and to illustrate them by familiar pictures. would fail in attaining his object, if he substituted fancies for reason, or linked his reasoning with too subtile images. Mr. Webster's imagination never leads him astray from his logic, but only illumines the path. It is no delicate Ariel, sporting with abstract thought, and clothing it in a succession of pleasing shapes; but a power fettered by the chain of argument it brightens. Even in his noblest bursts of eloquence, we are struck rather by the elevation of the feeling, than the vigor of the imagination. For instance, in the Bunker Hill oration, he closes an animated passage with the well-known sentence, — "Let it rise till it meet the sun in his coming; let the earliest light of morning gild it, and parting day *linger* and *play* upon its summit." If we take from this passage all the phrases which are not strictly original, and separate the sentiment from the invention, we shall find that it is not

eminently creative. Wordsworth in one word conveys a similar but more subtile imagination, in the lines commencing,

> "There is an eminence, of these our hills,
> The last that *parleys* with the setting sun."

When we consider, that the first comes from a mind in that excited state which prompts great images, and that the other is conceived in the calm of thought, we see the difference between a mind habitually looking at things with the eye of the understanding, and a mind habitually looking at things with the eye of imagination. Again, it would be difficult to believe that the sound of exquisite music would suggest to a mind like Mr. Webster's an image of such grace, fineness, and beauty, as the following from Shelley: —

> "My soul is an enchanted boat,
> Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
> Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
> And thine doth like an angel sit
> Beside the helm, conducting it,
> While all the winds with melody are ringing."

Here, the most inexpressible of all sweet emotions is shaped into a palpable form. Shelley, we know, is an extreme case, but therefore the best to illustrate the distinction we wish to make.

Mr. Webster is celebrated for his use of images drawn from familiar objects. Here, likewise, we discern the difference between the poet's imagination and the imagination of the orator and reasoner. The products of the one are of "imagination all compact," and those of the other can be easily distinguished from the idea they illustrate. From Shelley, a multitude of examples

might be taken, in which the most familiar things are linked with the most profound and most recondite analogies. We will quote one from his prose works, as a specimen. "The mind in inspiration is a *fading coal*, which some inconstant influence, like an invisible wind, wakes into momentary brightness." In this, the imagination not only suggests the analogy, but selects, with unerring tact, the words which best convey it to other imaginations; and yet, to Shelley, the whole process of its conception and expression was as natural an exercise of his peculiar mind, as to Mr. Webster would be the deduction of a conclusion from a premise. Indeed, we think that those who assert for our great statesman the inventive power of a poet, misconceive both poetry and him. The most rapid glance at his productions shows that he lacks the inwardness, the brooding spirit, which characterizes those men who "accommodate the shows of things to the desires of the mind." With all his tremendous power of thinking, he has little thoughtfulness, — little of the habit of quiet meditation. He could do things worthy of being recorded in a great poem; but he could not write a great poem.

We do not know but that this predominance of the reasoning over the imaginative power, in Mr. Webster's mind, is owing to the severe training to which his faculties have been subjected in the exercise of his profession. It is said that the compositions of his youth were more replete with images than arguments. But however this may be, it is certain that his manhood has witnessed the triumph of his understanding over the impulses of his passions and the analogies of his fancy. If one of his speeches be compared with one of Burke's or Curran's, it will be seen that in affluence of imagination he does

not hold the first rank among orators. The writings and speeches of Burke's later years are studded all over with images. So capricious and wayward was his imagination, that it scattered its rich treasures on themes the least congenial to the faculty, and the least apt to be benefited by its exercise. It began to work, the moment he began to write or speak. Analogies of the understanding and analogies of fancy are blended somewhat confusedly in many of his discourses, where the subject demanded a rigid adherence to reason. Allusions, metaphors, comparisons, cluster thickly round almost every argument. The clear, keen, penetrating logic, casting aside everything which does not immediately aid the progress of the discussion, and piercing through all obstacles straight to the object, is often wanting. The very quality of mind which lends such vividness and beauty to his diction, and which will ever make his works of inestimable value to men of taste, often interfered with the free exercise of his great understanding, and with the intensity and condensation of its expression.

Curran, whose reasoning capacity, however, was altogether inferior to Burke's, affords another instance. No one can read his speeches without seeing their admirable adaptation to the object of inflaming the passions and stimulating the imagination. The energy of his mind strikes us not so much as its exceeding fruitfulness. Byron said that he had heard him speak more poetry than he had ever seen written. Images, sometimes coarse and flaring, often in a high degree vivid and magnificent, and always vigorous and apposite, are poured out lavishly over every page of his imperfectly reported speeches. But the faults of such a style are as apparent as its beauties. It may serve before a jury or

n "caucus;" but it would be out of place in the senate. A practical statesman, whose mind was under the dominion of such an enchanter, would be liable to lose the confidence of his constituents, — would be apt to lose the confidence of his own understanding. There is an eloquence, grave, majestic, pervaded by deep feeling, expressing the loftiest principles of moral and political duty, replete with generous sentiment, and by no means destitute of vivid pictures, which is not inconsistent with the strictest exercise of the understanding in all those departments of thought over which the understanding holds rightful dominion; and of this kind is the eloquence of Mr. Webster.

Every great writer has a style of his own, constructed according to the character of his mind and disposition. The style of Mr. Webster has great merit, not only for its vigor, clearness and compression, but for the broad impress which it bears of the writer's nature. It owes nothing to the usual tricks of rhetoric, but seems the unforced utterance of his intellect, and is eminently *Websterian*. There is a granite-like strength in its construction. It varies, from the simple force and directness of logical statement, to a fierce, trampling energy of manner, with each variation of his mind from calmness to excitement. He appears moderately gifted with fluency. Were it not for the precision and grasp of his mind, he would probably be a hesitating extemporaneous speaker. But with a limited command of language, he has a large command of expression. He has none of the faults which spring from verbal fluency, and is never misled by his vocabulary. Words, in his mind, are not masters, but instruments. They seem selected, or rather clutched, by the faculty or feeling they serve. They

never overload his meaning. Perhaps extreme readiness in the use of language is prejudicial to depth and intensity of thinking. The ease with which a half-formed idea, swimming on the mind's surface, is clothed in equivocal words, and illustrated with vague images, is the "fatal facility" which produces mediocrity of thought. In Mr. Webster's style, we always perceive that a presiding power of intellect regulates his use of terms. The amplitude of his comprehension is the source of his felicity of expression. He bends language into the shape of his thought; he never accommodates his thought to his language. The grave, high, earnest nature of the man looks out upon us from his well-knit, massive, compact sentences. We feel that we are reading the works of one whose greatness of mind and strength of passion no conventionalism could distort, and no exterior process of culture could polish into feebleness and affectation; of one who has lived a life, as well as passed through a college, — who has looked at nature and man as they are in themselves, not as they appear in books. We can trace back expressions to influences coming from the woods and fields, — from the fireside of the farmer, — from the intercourse of social life. The secret of his style is not to be found in Kames or Blair, but in his own mental and moral constitution. There is a tough, sinewy strength in his diction, which gives it almost muscular power in forcing its way to the heart and understanding. Occasionally, his words are of that kind which are called "half-battles, stronger than most men's deeds." In the course of an abstract discussion, or a clear statement of facts, he will throw in a sentence which almost makes us spring to our feet. When vehemently roused, either from the excitement of opposition, or in unfolding a great

principle which fills and expands his soul, or in paying homage to some noble exemplar of virtue and genius, his style has a Miltonic grandeur and roll, which can hardly be surpassed for majestic eloquence. In that exulting rush of the mind, when every faculty is permeated by feeling, and works with all the force of passion, his style has a corresponding swiftness and energy, and seems endowed with power to sweep all obstacles from its path. In those inimitable touches of wit and sarcasm, also, where so much depends on the selection and collocation of apt and expressive language, and where the object is to pelt and tease rather than to crush, his diction glides easily into colloquial forms, and sparkles with animation and point. In the speech in reply to Hayne, the variety of his style is admirably exemplified. The pungency and force of many strokes of sarcasm, in this celebrated production, the rare felicity of their expression, the energy and compression of the wit, and the skill with which all are made subsidiary to the general purpose of the orator, afford fine examples of what may be termed the science of debate. There is a good-humored mockery, covering, however, much grave satire, in his reference to the bugbear of Federalism.

"We all know a process," he says, "by which the whole Essex Junto could, in one hour, be washed white from their ancient federalism, and come out, every one of them, an original democrat, dyed in the wool! Some of them have actually undergone the operation, and they say it is quite easy. The only inconvenience it occasions, as they tell us, is a slight tendency of the blood to the head, a soft suffusion, which, however, is very transient, since nothing is said by those they join calculated to deepen the red in the cheek, but a prudent silence is observed in regard to all the past."

In the second speech on the Sub-treasury, after enumerating the various countings which the "public moneys" would undergo, if collected and disbursed according to the specie plan, he introduces a ludicrous image, which, when taken in connection with the strain of argument that precedes it, is almost unrivalled as a felicitous stroke of ridicule. "Sir," he says, "what a money-counting, tinkling, jingling generation we shall be! All the money-changers in Solomon's Temple will be as nothing to us. Our sound will go forth into all lands. We shall all be like the king in the ditty of the nursery: —

'There sat the king a-counting of his money.'"

The sarcasm of Mr. Webster, when it is exercised on things which awake his resentment, is often exceedingly sharp and severe; and his very words seem to cut, and sting, and hiss, in their utterance. This power he rarely uses, except when some malignant personal attack calls it forth; and then he is merciless. He not only wounds, but he probes and torments the quivering flesh of his victim. His expression of scorn and contempt, likewise, is measureless and crushing. When taunted with a participation in things, the very suspicion of which is offensive to his pride or his dignity, he does not condescend to defend himself, or to be enraged; but his scorn darts instantly to the motives of the attack, and to the baseness of the imputation. He ever gives the impression, that the originator of the libel was aware of its incongruity with the character of Daniel Webster, and therefore was compelled to support it by the hardiest falsehood. The reference to the "murdered coalition" is a case in point.

"Doubtless," he says, "it served its day, and, in a greater or less degree, the end designed by it. Having done that, it has sunk into the general mass of stale and loathed calumnies. It is the very cast-off slough of a polluted and shameless press. Incapable of further mischief, it lies in the sewer, lifeless and despised. It is not now, sir, in the power of the honorable member to give it dignity and decency, by attempting to elevate it, and to introduce it into the Senate. He cannot change it from what it is, an object of general disgust and scorn. On the contrary, the contact, if he choose to touch it, is more likely to drag him down, down to the place where it lies itself."

In these observations on some of the characteristics of Mr. Webster, we have not attempted a complete analysis of his mind, or followed him in any of those political and constitutional discussions in which it has been so ably exercised. We have rather taken a general view of his works, with reference to the large mental power and strong points of character they evince, and the elevated station they occupy as literary productions. We have claimed for them some of the highest honors of the intellect. We have considered them as being eminently American in their subjects and principles, and as constituting an important part of our national literature. But we well know how little justice can be done a great man, in thus taking, as it were, his nature to pieces, and examining each portion separately. In the case of an author like Mr. Webster, whose different powers interpenetrate each other, and produce by joint action a harmonious result, it requires a more potent alchemy than we have applied thoroughly to resolve his different productions into the elements from whose combination they have sprung.

We have likewise run the risk of being charged with exaggeration, in our estimate of his capacity. The

perfect clearness of his arrangement, and the straightforward, thorough-going force of his mind, by which he simplifies subjects the most intricate to common understandings, and exhibits them in what Bacon calls "dry light," are not likely to be appreciated by those who judge obscurity to be a necessary ingredient of the profound. There appears nothing wonderful in the result, for it seems simple and easy of comprehension; but the wonder is in the process by which the result is obtained. Two or three judicious mysticisms, an arrangement half clear and half confused, a little mingling of assertion with deduction, a suppression of some facts, a lofty enunciation of a few abstract propositions, and a less comprehensive mode of argumentation, would give him, in the minds of many, a greater reputation as a deep reasoner, than he could obtain from his rigid severity of method, his penetrating sharpness of analysis, and his massive good sense. There is more likelihood that such an author would be underrated, than that the triumphs of his understanding would elicit exaggerated panegyric.

In the United States, there is much fanaticism in the opinions — we will not insult reason by calling them judgments — expressed of public men. There are two species of cant prevailing, — the cant of absurd panegyric, and the cant of absurd invective; and it has become almost a custom for men indiscriminately to denounce certain statesmen, against whom they have no feeling of hatred, and indiscriminately to eulogize others, for whom they have no feeling of admiration. Praise and blame are thus made independent of the qualities which should call them forth. In the jargon of this political rhetoric, there is no sliding scale of morality or immorality, genius or stupidity; but the

boundaries are fixed, with geometrical precision, at those points where one party comes face to face with another. On one side are knavery and folly, on the other side are honesty and wisdom. Of course, such a code of criticism admits of no minute distinctions or shades in the delineation of character. A few epithets, of the bitterest gall or the sweetest honey, suffice for the purpose.

We are not so simple as to believe that this mode of deciding upon the character and ability of public men goes any deeper than words. It is merely a vice of the pen and the tongue, and has no foundation in the heart of the community. We have no apology, therefore, to make for reviewing the works of one who is connected with a great political party, and whose speeches, in some respects, are an exponent of its principles. As so many of our eminent men are engaged in public life, it would be folly in neutral literary journals to avoid noticing their productions, for fear of wounding the sensitiveness of one class, and disregarding the wishes of another. In respect to literature and intellectual power, there should be no partisan feeling. We have not considered Daniel Webster as a politician, but as an American. We do not possess great men in such abundance as to be able to spare one from the list. It is clearly our pride and interest to indulge in an honest exultation at any signs of intellectual supremacy in one of our own countrymen. His talents and acquirements are so many arguments for republicanism. They are an answer to the libel, that, under our constitution, and in the midst of our society, large powers of mind and marked individuality of character cannot be developed and nourished. We have in Mr. Webster the example of a man whose youth saw the foundation of our government, and whose maturity

has been spent in exercising some of its highest offices; who was born on our soil, educated amid our people, exposed to all the malign and beneficent influences of our society; and who has acquired high station by no sinuous path, by no sacrifice of manliness, principle, or individuality, but by a straight-forward force of character and vigor of intellect. A fame such as he has obtained is worthy of the noblest ambition; it reflects honor on the whole nation; it is stained by no meanness, or fear, or subserviency; it is the result of a long life of intellectual labor, employed in elucidating the spirit of our laws and government, in defending the principles of our institutions, in disseminating enlarged views of patriotism and duty, and in ennobling, by the most elevated sentiments of freedom and religion, the heroical events of our national history. And we feel assured, when the animosities of party have been stilled at the tomb, and the great men of this generation have passed from the present feverish sphere of excitement into the calm of history, that it will be with feelings of unalloyed pride and admiration, that the scholar, the lawyer, the statesman, the orator, the *American*, will ponder over the writings of Daniel Webster.

NEAL'S HISTORY OF THE PURITANS.*

We are pleased to see an American edition of this valuable work on political and ecclesiastical history, edited with a care which insures the correctness of its statements, and placed at a price which brings it within the reach of the humblest book-collector. It is reprinted from the text of Dr. Toulmin's edition, containing his notes, illustrations, and corrections, and thoroughly revised by Mr. Choules, the American editor. It now forms, probably, the most complete, and, in the main, the most correct account of one of the most remarkable bodies of men that ever appeared in the world.

Mr. Choules has executed his task with marked ability. His notes give evidence of the care with which he has scrutinized the text of his author, and the extent of his researches into the literature and history of the periods he illustrates. He has consulted the most approved works on the subject, especially some which have been published since Dr. Toulmin's edition appeared; and has rescued from oblivion many a choice sentence and pregnant fact, interred in old and rare

* The History of the Puritans, or Protestant Non-conformists, from the Reformation in 1517, to the Revolution in 1688; comprising an Account of their Principles; their Attempts for a further Reformation in the Church; their Sufferings; and the Lives and Characters of their most considerable Divines. By Daniel Neal, M.A. Revised, corrected, and enlarged, with Additional Notes, by John O. Choules, M.A. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1844. 2 vols. 8vo — *North American Review, January*, 1845.

pamphlets and tomes eaten by time. The editing of the book has evidently been a labor of love; and much has been added to make us more familiar with the habits, manners, modes of thought, and principles of action, current among the Puritans, and to enable us to appreciate the position they occupied with respect to their contemporaries. Both of the editors are characterized by a love of religious liberty, and do not hesitate to give their author a little gentle correction when he slips from the principles of toleration. Both are Baptists; Dr. Toulmin an Arian Baptist, Mr. Choules a Calvinistic one. In the notes of the former, some curious information is given respecting the Unitarians who were mingled among the persecuted non-conformists, and of the hot disputes which sometimes occurred between men confined in one prison, for one offence.

Mr. Choules occasionally allows a little acerbity to steal into his style, in referring to the pretensions of Episcopacy and Catholicism; but not more than could be expected from a man who has devoted years to a tract of history blasted by the fire of theological hatred, and red with the blood of the saints. It is almost impossible for any person, whose pulse leaps at the thought of senseless and brutal wrong, done to men whose sin consisted in being purer and more honest than their contemporaries, to travel through circumstantial details of rapine and murder, without occasionally letting loose his tongue, both at the perpetrators and at the systems under which such crimes were sanctified. Such little deviations from the bland and opinionless impartiality with which such enormities should be contemplated, must be forgiven to those who edit narratives of religious feuds and persecutions.

The Rev. Daniel Neal, the author of the work, lived at a period when the ardor of theological dispute and recrimination had become allayed, and when the history of the Puritans could be written with the calmness requisite for truth and fairness. He was born in 1678, and died in 1743. The first volume of his history appeared in 1732. He was a clergyman of the old school of laborers, once so common in New England, writing two sermons a week for thirty years, devoting eight or twelve afternoons in the month to visiting his congregation, and after wearing out brain and body in the service of his people, dying at last with the pen literally trembling in his hand. Though, in his doctrinal sentiments, a Calvinist, and a sturdy defender of his creed, he appears to have been temperate and just to others, disliking warfare on points of faith, and especially opposed to that mode of argument which addresses the reason through penal laws and machines of torture. He was what the world, almost universally, would call a good man, — performing all the relations of life with exemplary fidelity, and presenting a character which infidelity could not but honor, and even licentiousness respect. We believe that he aimed conscientiously at truth in his history, and was incapable of a deliberate perversion of fact. The general fairness of his statements, though doubted at times, has never been successfully impugned. All the errors which criticism has discovered in his work arose either from the imperfection of his materials, or that unconscious bias towards his own party, from which the most candid minds are not always free. His character, in every respect, shines well, as contrasted with that of his opponents, Grey and Warburton, who brought in question his historical hon

esty. The candor of such a critic as Dr. Grey may be estimated by his edition of Hudibras, in which he seems to have taken great delight in prowling amidst the literary filth of Charles the Second's time, to rake up morsels of ribaldry, originally directed by sensualists and renegades against the Puritans, and which, by the mercy of the world, would otherwise have been allowed to rot out of existence. The fierce, unjust, domineering spirit of Warburton, whose vast learning was held in bondage to paradox and bigotry, and who passed to preferment and power through the gate of sycophancy, was not peculiarly fitted to criticize, or even consistently to abuse, such a man as Neal. At any rate, all the light which has been shed on the times since the original work was written has flowed freely into the minds of its editors, and any mistakes into which the author may have fallen have been rigorously corrected. As it now stands, it can be taken as a reliable history, in which matters of fact and matters of opinion are cautiously discriminated.

The style of Neal's work, if it does not evince a large command of expression, is still not deficient in many excellences. It contains numerous passages of that homely eloquence, which springs from simple earnestness of feeling, and finds its way directly to the heart. There is occasionally much felicity in the selection of words embodying homely fancies, and which convey the sense by suggesting an image. This characterizes, indeed, almost all the school of writers to which Neal belonged, and gives to many of the forgotten pamphlets of the last half of the seventeenth century a raciness of style more expressive than elegant. There is, at times, considerable picturesque quaintness in Neal, and not unfrequently a kind of half-suppressed irony, which

relieve the business-like character of the general diction of his history. We have not found the book dull. By occasionally skipping or condensing an account of some non-conformist preacher, in whose biography the author's pen is a little too liberal of ink, and disregarding a few abstracts of voluminous documents, we think it would please the general reader. The honesty and simplicity of the writer's nature shine clearly through his style, and give it an originality and freshness which it could not derive from a more scrupulous rhetoric, and a less natural arrangement. In the narration of facts, the disposition of arguments, the compression of evidence, the review of disputed questions, and often in the keen criticism of motives, and clear insight into matters overladen with wordy passion, the style and the mind of Neal are displayed to great advantage. It is difficult to resist the conclusion, that the intention of the author, in writing his work, was not to serve any party or private views, but that his object was, in his own words, to do "some service to the cause of truth, and to the religious and civil liberties of mankind."

We think the publication of this book timely, apart from its historical value and interest. The great principle, on which rested equally the justice of the Reformation and the Puritan secession, is now often called in question. Authority once more declares its right to supersede conscience. The thoughts and feelings of the tenth and fourteenth centuries are translated into the language of the nineteenth. Propositions, long considered as truisms, are now attacked as paradoxes. Archbishop Laud has his eulogists; Luther his detractors. The right of the individual mind to form its faith from the most thoughtful and candid perusal of the Bible is

denied. All the blood that has been shed, all the tortures which have been endured, all the miseries which have been suffered, to convert this principle into an established fact, are thus implied to have been wasted. The world has been battling blindly to establish a great heresy, repugnant to right reason and to the word of God; and the inference is, that many of the martyrs have but "passed out of one flame into another." If this right of individual judgment be a mere figment of the brain, the wars into which it has led some of the best and noblest of the race are the greatest satires on human folly and depravity ever written in blood, and consecrated by suffering and heroism.

We know and deprecate the evils of dissent, and the evils which flow from the unrestrained exercise of individual judgment in matters of religion. Atheism and fanaticism — the one denying, the other degrading, God — are the two pits into which the inquirer is liable to fall, who casts off authority, and trusts to his own mind. The volumes before us are full of examples which tell against kirk as well as against church. Senseless doctrines, accompanied by bigotry equally senseless; hatreds taking the name of duties; passions wearing the guise of revelations; pride and conceit speaking the language of conscience; — these too often meet us among the zealots who were associated with the Puritans, and among all great bodies of men who have opposed religious hierarchies. The dunce and the enthusiast are ever ready to supplant the established superstition with the superstition of ignorance and passion. But evils as bad as these cling to the best efforts of man, and arise from the imperfection of his nature. Besides, it should not be forgotten, that it is chiefly persecution that forces

men into fanaticism. The dreams and ravings of zealots, wrought into uncontrollable excitement by the discipline of torture and confiscation, are arguments against the extravagant pretensions and wanton cruelties of the oppressors who drove them mad. That English liberty has been preserved and extended, that the rights of the human mind in matters pertaining to government, as well as religion, have not suffered a disastrous eclipse in the shadow of absolutism, is owing to the determined stand taken by the Puritans, as a body, for liberty of conscience, and to the indomitable energy with which they fought, with the sword and with the pen, against civil and ecclesiastical tyranny. There were evils accompanying non-conformity; but who can compare them with those which must have followed a tame acquiescence in the exactions of the prelacy and the king? It is too common to pass over these pioneers and martyrs of English freedom, and refer the results of their labors to the agency of less powerful and more selfish spirits. "How many earnest, rugged Cromwells, Knoxes, poor peasant Covenanters, wrestling, battling for very life, in rough, miry places, have to struggle, and suffer, and fall, greatly censured, bemired, — before a beautiful Revolution of Eighty-eight can step over them, in official pumps and silk stockings, with universal three-times three!"

In Neal's History, we have circumstantial accounts of the errors of both parties. We should be the last to apologize for those of the Puritans. Bigotry and exclusiveness derive no charm from being practised by persecuted sects. But we think a distinction is to be made between the intolerance of men who persecute to sustain themselves in office and dignity, and those who persecute from honest though mistaken views of the necessity of

certain doctrines to salvation. Besides, persecution is a bad school in which to learn toleration. If a body of men be deprived of their dearest rights for professing conscientious opinions, it is natural that they should attach more importance to those opinions than if they were allowed their free exercise. It not only makes them more sturdy champions of their belief, but it leads them into intolerance towards others. The most impolitic course for a dominant party to pursue is to array the passions on the side of dissent. In England, it has been the fashion to support the established church, and discourage secession, by coërcion and exclusion; yet all that the stake, the pillory, and civil disabilities, have done is, to multiply dissenters, and widen the breach originally made. In the case of men like the Puritans, — men of iron, to whom all the principalities and powers on earth were as nothing compared with the commands of God, on whom worldly comforts and worldly miseries could not operate as temptations or dissuasives where the interests of religion were concerned, — such a course comes under that melancholy class of offences which are blunders as well as crimes. It has been eloquently remarked, by one of the most prominent statesmen of the age, that, "even when religious feeling takes a character of extravagance and enthusiasm, and seems to threaten the order of society, and shake the columns of the social edifice, its principal danger is in its restraint. If it be allowed indulgence and expansion, like the elemental fires, it only agitates and perhaps purifies the atmosphere; while its efforts to throw off restraint would burst the world asunder."

Few religious writers have excelled Neal, either in ardor or argument for liberty of conscience. He has

anticipated Macaulay in several propositions contained in his paper in the Edinburgh Review, on "Church and State;" and, indeed, most of Macaulay's writings on the period of the Rebellion and the Protectorate evince a close study of Neal. Though the latter preserves a strain of decorous loyalty and contented submission to the settlement of the clashing claims of Churchmen and Dissenters by the Revolution of 1688, he has many sly thrusts at the injustice and imperfection of the laws. He takes the position, in one of his prefaces, that it is the office of the civil magistrate to protect his loyal subjects in the free exercise of their religion; not to incorporate one religion into the constitution, and make conformity to that the test of loyalty and faith. He contends, that religion and civil government are distinct things, *and stand upon a separate basis.* "To incorporate one religion into the constitution, so as to make it a part of the common law, and to conclude from thence that the constitution, having a right to preserve itself, may make laws for the punishment of those that publicly oppose any one branch of it, is to put an effectual stop to the progress of the reformation throughout the Christian world; for by this reasoning our first reformers must be condemned;" and he proceeds to show, that, if a subject of France wrote against Catholicism, he might, on the reasoning of Churchmen, be punished as a disturber of the public peace, because "Popery is supported by law, and is a very considerable part of their constitution."

The exercise of private judgment on matters of religion, if it sometimes produces superstition, more often overthrows error. It is that intellectual action among a people, which gives vitality to their worship and creeds. It prevents faith from degenerating into a ceremony, and

transfers belief from the lips to the soul. It is almost the only limit to the besotted bigotry, or the smooth indifference, which so often accompanies unquestioned religious dogmas. It is always most active when the established form of religion is most tyrannical or most debased. And it is the school in which true manliness and true godliness of character are nurtured. The faith that has grown up in a man's soul, which he has adopted from his own investigations, or his own inward experience, is the faith that sustains men in temptations, and in the blaze of the fires of martyrdom. In faith like this, we perceive the heroic element in the character of the Puritans. It is this which endows their history with so many of those consecrations usually considered to belong exclusively to poetry and romance. To a person who sees through the mere shows of things, the annals of the Puritans are replete with the materials of the heroic. There is no aspect of human nature more sublime than the spectacle of men daring death, and things worse than death, under the influence of inspiration from on high. Their actions, thus springing from religious principle, and connected by a mysterious link with the invisible realities of another world, impress us with a deeper veneration than we can award to the most tremendous struggles for terrestrial objects. That is no common heroism which fears nothing but God's justice, which braves everything for God's favor. That is no common heroism which breasts the flood of popular hatred, which bares its forehead to the thunders of dominant hierarchies, which scorns alike the delusions of worldly pomp and the commands of worldly governments, which is insensible to the jeer of the scoffer and the curse of the bigot, which smites at wickedness girded round with power

which is strong in endurance as well as in action, which marches to battle chanting hymns of devotional rapture, and which looks with an unclouded eye to heaven amid the maddening tortures of the rack. Men who have thus conquered the fear of death, the love of ease, the temptations of the world, — who have subdued all the softer passions and all the sensual appetites to the control of one inflexible moral purpose, who have acted through life under the sense that there is a power on earth more authoritative than the decisions of councils, and mightier than kings, — are not the men whom worldlings can safely venture to deride, or for whom placid theologians can afford to profess contempt.

The debt of gratitude which the world owes to the Puritans, for the stand they took for the rights of conscience and the liberties of mankind, has never been freely paid. Their influence on modern civilization, moral, religious, and political, has rarely been justly estimated. The austerity of their manners, the peculiarities of their speech and dress, the rigor of their creeds, have been allowed to divert attention from their manifold virtues. Yet it would be difficult to name any body of men, connected by a religious and political bond, that has been so fruitful, not merely in divines, but in warriors, statesmen, and scholars. Milton, Selden, Hampden, Cromwell, Eliot, Pym, Knox, Baxter, Bunyan, among many others eminent in action or speculation, are names which have become woven into the texture of history. In the department of theology, the labors of the Puritans have been absolutely gigantic; and whatever may be the estimate of their importance, no one can fail to appreciate the prodigious masses of learning which they patiently piled up as defences of the Gospel,

and the acuteness and grasp of thought with which they often seized the darkest and most tangled questions of metaphysical divinity.

But it is in the position they occupy in English history, that we most delight to contemplate the Puritans. We believe, that, as a body, they were the most sincere and zealous advocates of the Reformation. The taint of selfishness, of political expediency, of worldly ambition and worldly lusts, is seen in the motives which influenced the secession of the Church of England from the Church of Rome. It was a political more than a religious movement. It had its first inspiration from appetite, not from conscience. We reverence the Puritans for their honesty, in refusing to submit to the exactions of the new oppression, — for their dislike of any coquetry between Protestantism and Popery, — for their opposition to the mingling of temporal with spiritual interests, and to the coöperation of the church in the sins and corruptions of the state. Their stern and sturdy adherence to what they deemed the requisitions of conscience and the will of God will never cease to act as an inspiration to all who raise, in after times, the banner of revolt against accredited tyranny and established falsehood. Through the reign of Elizabeth, of James the First, of Charles the First, of Charles the Second, constantly pelted as they were with satire, and exposed to the most brutal wrongs and contumelies, — with literature, fashion, taste, power, all arrayed against them, — they ever preserved those titles to respect which cling to virtue and religion. Compared with the greedy politicians, the time-serving priests, the effeminate and dissolute courtiers, the venal writers, who honored them with their hatred or their ridicule, they loom up in almost colossal proportions,

and frown rebuke on the corruptions of their age. We are not blind to their errors; we do not sympathize with their theology; we could wish that much of their enthusiasm had received a better direction, and that much of their piety had been accompanied by more kindliness of spirit; but when we consider the trials they underwent, the school of persecution in which they were trained, the character of the abuses which they assailed, the meanness and baseness of too many of their adversaries, and the inestimable services they rendered to the world, their faults and errors seem to dwindle before the light of their faith, their virtue, and their heroic self-devotion.

The Puritans, — there is a charm in that word which will never be lost on a New England ear. It is closely associated with all that is great in New England history. It is hallowed by a thousand memories of obstacles overthrown, of dangers nobly braved, of sufferings unshrinkingly borne, in the service of freedom and religion. It kindles at once the pride of ancestry, and inspires the deepest feelings of national veneration. It points to examples of valor in all its modes of manifestation, — in the hall of debate, on the field of battle, before the tribunal of power, at the martyr's stake. It is a name which will never die out of New England hearts. Wherever virtue resists temptation, wherever men meet death for religion's sake, wherever the gilded baseness of the world stands abashed before conscientious principle, there will be the spirit of the Puritans. They have left deep and broad marks of their influence on human society. Their children, in all times, will rise up and call them blessed. A thousand witnesses of their courage, their industry, their sagacity, their invincible persever-

ance in well-doing, their love of free institutions, their respect for justice, their hatred of wrong, are all around us, and bear grateful evidence daily to their memory. We cannot forget them, even if we had sufficient baseness to wish it. Every spot of New England earth has a story to tell of them; every cherished institution of New England society bears the print of their minds. The strongest element of New England character has been transmitted with their blood. So intense is our sense of affiliation with their nature, that we speak of them universally as our "fathers." And though their fame everywhere else were weighed down with calumny and hatred, though the principles for which they contended, and the noble deeds they performed, should become the scoff of sycophants and oppressors, and be blackened by the smooth falsehoods of the selfish and the cold, there never will be wanting hearts in New England to kindle at their virtues, nor tongues and pens to vindicate their name.

WORDSWORTH.*

The imaginative literature of the present century is a subject which criticism has not yet exhausted. At the period in which its great works were produced, many causes prevented them from being judged in a spirit of fairness. The acknowledgment of an author's merit depended, to a great extent, on personal and political considerations. Malignity and partisanship both warped the straight line of analysis. The numerous disquisitions which have appeared since these passions have been somewhat allayed have still left room for individual diversities of opinion. We have thought that a view of the character and tendencies of the imaginative literature of the present age, in connection with the individual and poetical characters of its four great exponents, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Scott, would not be distasteful to our readers. We have selected these from the large army of contemporary poets, because in this, as in other armies, we must look to the leaders for the direction of the march, and the conduct of the war. We commence with Wordsworth.

Literature has its ebb and flow, its periods of plenty and barrenness, of progress and retrogression. At one time, we observe a race of authors spring up, as if by

*The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth. Philadelphia: James Kay, Jr., & Brother. 8vo. 1837. — *North American Review, October*, 1844.

magic, who reflect and modify current tastes and opinions, communicate a new energy to all departments of letters, become the founders of a school of literature, and trail after them an admiring body of disciples and imitators. But their influence gradually decays. The spirit that animated their writings dies out. New ideas and new ideals take possession of the national mind. Those of the school who remain copy their master's manner, without catching any of their master's soul. Then generally follows a period of mental sterility, — a weary waste in intellectual history, dotted by only a few spots of verdure and beauty. Soon, however, a reäction commences. The dulness and debility consequent upon a cringing and servile admiration of past merit gradually provoke the best-natured "reading public" into wrath. A new order or development of literature supplants the old, — a literature more affected by contemporary events and opinions, more expressive of the advancing character of the people, more original and bold. This, again, when emancipated from the slavery of the past, exercises its tyranny upon the future.

These facts account in some degree for the wide diversities observable in the intellectual history of civilized nations. In one age, we find the loftiest genius, in another, the meanest mediocrity, in the high places of letters. Edmund Spenser, John Dryden, Colley Cibber, Henry James Pye, and Robert Southey, have all been poet-laureates of England. The age of Pericles, of Augustus, of Lorenzo de Medici, of Elizabeth, of Queen Anne, periods of peculiar brilliancy in literary annals, were succeeded by times in which imitation, rather than creation, was the poet's boast. A great author thus establishes a kind of despotism over his successors. The

freedom of their minds is trammelled by the canons of taste deduced from his writings. Until imitation has run into a spiritless mannerism, and given over the domain of letters to elegant imbecility or galvanized commonplace, it is rare that the reäction commences; and when it does occur, it is often accompanied by those wild excesses which stain most rebellions against established power.

Thus it was, in some degree, with that rebellion against what is absurdly called the correct school of poetry, which has occurred within the last fifty years. It is hardly possible for any person to contrast the torpid formality and florid feebleness which characterized most of the current rhyme of the last generation, with the vigor, the broad scope, the earnestness, the sensibility, the intellectual and moral power, which distinguish the poetry of the present age, without being led into an inquiry concerning the causes of so wide a difference. It seems as if the dead body of literature had been touched by the hand of an enchanter, and had sprung upon its feet. To whatever department of letters we turn, we find it swarming with occupants. Signs of mental life and energy meet and reward the eye in every direction. Everything we see tells us that the paralysis which struck the inventive powers of the past generation has not benumbed the imagination of our own. The poet has once more ceased to worship fashion and metre, and returned to nature and truth. The scales have fallen from his eyes, and he can see; the fetters have dropped from his limbs, and he can move; the burden has passed away from his soul, and he can soar.

It is impossible to frame any general laws which shall

comprehend all the phenomena that precede or accompany a change in the character of a national literature. But there were various causes — some obvious, some recondite, and all in harmony with historical truth — which undoubtedly influenced the character of the poetry that sprung up on the ruins of the critical and artificial school of the time of Queen Anne. That way of writing had miserably degenerated in the compositions of its disciples. All that was admirable in Pope, its great master, could not be reproduced. The keen, searching satire, the stinging wit, the teeming fancy, the sharp compression of style, which characterized the little man of Twickenham, were beyond imitation; but the flow of his verse, and the artifice of his manner, were not so difficult of attainment. These merely required a good ear and an empty heart; two things which are wonderfully common in all ages. As a matter of course, poetry became feeble and melodious, refined and trite, heartless and genteel. Most of the poems formed on Pope's model made a smooth descent into that nothingness from which they had so daintily arisen, hardly attracting sufficient attention to "pay the expenses of their journey to oblivion." The last faint echo of the "Rape of the Lock" was given in the "Triumphs of Temper" of the "amiable" Hayley. During the sixty years which followed the death of Pope, the few good poems which have journeyed down to the present time can hardly be said to have been indebted to his example for any of their merits. They were angel visits, infrequent though celestial sights, to a generation seemingly dull and dead to high poetic feeling.

The revolution, however, came at last. The attention of men, sick of monotony and debility, was turned to the

earlier and palmy days, the true Augustan age of English literature, — to that wonderful band of authors that adorned the reign of Elizabeth, — to Shakspeare, Johnson, Fletcher, Spenser, and Bacon. The vast stores of meditation, imagination, and passion, contained in the works of the elder dramatists, were explored. The fine old English ballads, brimful of nature and truth, were placed side by side with the nerveless couplets of heroic rhymers. Burns and Cowper, each after his own way, had shown that there was something new to be said about nature and human life. The butterflies of the Della Cruscan school were broken on the wheel of Gifford's satire, — fit engine for such a work. Even the nonsensical sentimentalities imported from Germany indicated that maudlin feeling and spurious energy were tolerated for the realities which they suggested as well as caricatured. Both in the work of demolition and in the blundering attempts at constructing anew, the same spirit was manifested.

The two principal causes of the change in the tone and character of literature were, probably, the French Revolution, and that tendency in the highest minds towards spiritualism, which was expressed in the revival of what is now vaguely called the "transcendental philosophy." These likewise gave the impulse to some of those agents in the work which we have before noted. Both exerted on the feelings and opinions of men a vast influence. Between the French Revolution, which was the child of French atheism, and the philosophy which reäcted against it, there seems, on the first glance, to be little connection; yet no one can examine the poetry of the time without perceiving that these two influences almost interpenetrate each other in their effect upon the

national mind. They are seen in all the high, imaginative literature which at all reflects the spirit of the age.

Of the influence of the "spiritual philosophy" it is difficult to speak here at sufficient length, or with any discrimination. It is a name applicable to a large number of systems, and often perversely applied to opinions which it does not cover. It is certain, however, that, during the period when poetry was most artificial and didactic, the current philosophy was unspiritual. Bolingbroke and Pope are the fit representatives of the speculation and the imagination of their age. The "Essay on Man," in which the thoughts and arguments are known to be Bolingbroke's, is a meet philosophical counterpart to the "Essay on Criticism." Berkeley's system is hardly an exception to the rule, for he stands as much apart from his time as Milton does from the time of Charles the Second. The reäction in Scotland and other countries against materialism may be said to have been occasioned by the necessities of natural religion, and the want experienced of a philosophy which should comprehend all the elements of human nature. Both in philosophy and poetry, there was a demand for something which prevalent systems had overlooked. The spirit of transcendental speculation deeply infects the poetry of Wordsworth, Shelley, Coleridge, Keats, and Tennyson, and partly that of Byron. It is the inspiration of the most popular verse produced in our own country. Were Pope's "Essay on Man" and Longfellow's "Voices of the Night" published here for the first time to-morrow, the "Voices" would attract ten times as many listeners as the "Essay." The fertile fancy, harmonious numbers, and brilliant good sense of Pope, would not compensate for his lack of mystical charm. This change

from the sensual to the super-sensual in poetry has not been unattended by abuses as well as beauties. To read some metrical productions of the crude dabblers in spiritualism is a worse physical infliction than the nightmare or the tooth-ache.

Pure spiritualism, as a system of philosophy, imposes on external nature the laws of the understanding or the reason; poetry imposes on nature the laws of the imagination. Both make the inner world of the mind paramount to the external world of matter. The purest poetry is that in which the imagination either evolves from material objects the latent spiritual meaning they secrete, or superadds to those objects thoughts and feelings which the senses cannot perceive as residing in them. It thus transcends the sphere of the senses, and is, in a measure, transcendental. No definition of poetry can be more incorrect than that which confines it to imitation, in the usual sense of the word. Even in descriptive poetry, the forms and colors of nature are not imitated, but represented. The mind that describes is always predominant in the description, and gives as much as it takes. Two true poets would probably give an essentially different description of the same landscape. In truth, in the hands of the imagination, nature is apt to be a huge plaything, to be tossed about, and forced into whatever shape, and made to symbolize whatever sentiment, the sovereign faculty may impose. The poet, "of imagination all compact," stands before the vast universe of things, and makes it speak the language of his own heart and mind. Everything stable and fixed, and hard in matter, becomes wax under his touch. All outward objects are colored by the hues of his feelings. He perceives nature rather with the

nternal than with the external senses. If his soul be darkened by despondency, he can spread a thunder-cloud over the serenest sky; if there be no sunshine in his heart, he can see no sun in the heavens. He sees with his soul rather than with his eye. One of the greatest poets that ever lived — we mean John Bunyan, homely as may be the associations connected with the inspired tinker's name — has left some most pertinent instances in his writings of the sway exercised by the imagination over the external senses. In describing the dark internal conflicts which convulsed him, during one stage of his religious experience, he says: — "I lifted up my head, and methought I saw as if the sun that shineth in the heavens did *grudge* to give me light; as if the very stones in the street, and tiles upon the houses, did band themselves against me." This is as perfect poetry as ever was written.

Thus all poetry must, to a great extent, be transcendental. If, in delineating the forms of nature, nothing is superadded, the result is prose. The imagination ever indicates the natural superiority of mind over matter, by the lordliness with which it changes the aspects of the material creation. In representing and combining outward objects, it stamps them with a new character. There is hardly a portion of earth which it has not decked with new colors. It has made the world we live in radiant with beauty, by clustering its analogies around all the objects which meet our senses. There is scarcely a form of visible nature which bears not the mark of its celestial footprints. It opens a new revelation of loveliness in everything it touches. A generation of poets never leave the world as they find it. It becomes a more blessed habitation to the humblest, for every bard who

connects any of its forms, colors and sounds, with spiritual truths. Thus poetry ministers to that high aspiration in man for "a more ample greatness and exact goodness, the world being inferior to the soul."

All high imaginative poetry thus transcends the actual sphere of existence. But the poetry of the present age is distinguished by what may be called its philosophical as well as its imaginative character. It grasps at the solution of the dark problems of man's existence and destiny. It grapples with the doubts and fears which perplex the understanding. It watches the movements of the soul, intent on fixing and giving shape to the most fleeting shades of thought and emotion. It is even familiar with the dark and tangled paths of metaphysics. Nothing is too humble for its love, nothing too lofty for its aspirations. The peasant, the monarch, the thinker, are all represented in its creations and ideal forms. Its end is not merely to please, but to inspire and instruct. Whether dealing with scepticism or faith, whether confirming or shaking common belief, it is always in earnest. It is never content with the careless play of fancy, or the cold exercise of reason, on subjects which relate to God, man, and the universe. Its philosophy is not a dead formula, but a living faith, by which the value of institutions is to be tested, and in obedience to which all things must be ruled. It mingles with all the interests of mankind, and gives voice and form to its rights, its wrongs, and its aspirations. It is, as it were, the champion of humanity, declaring the infinite worth of the individual soul, and, both in anathemas and appeals, striking at all social and political despotisms. The force of its practical teachings, the influence of its lofty declarations of duty and freedom, depend on the

fact, that man is a spiritual being, with thoughts and affections transcending the sensible world, and bearing a relation to a future as well as a present life.

Thus poetry, as it makes the material universe more beautiful and sublime by associating its properties with the operations of the mind, has, also, especially in the present age, thrown new consecrations around the nature of man, and weakened the force of those slavish bonds of opinion, which bind the victim of the world's tyrannies more strongly than with chains. And this brings us to the consideration of the other grand event of the time, whose effect on the character of its imaginative literature is so great and obvious.

The opinions and contests to which the French Revolution gave rise stirred the mind of all Europe to its depths. This great convulsion left its traces deep in the works of almost every author. All changes in the habits, opinions, manners, government, and religion of society, call for and create a new epoch in literature; and the revolution in France was especially calculated to produce this effect. In England, the new opinions and new aspirations, which the great social earthquake excited, affected, in some degree, all departments of letters. It was especially adapted to inflame the passions and stimulate the imagination. There was a general uprooting of everything on which the moss of time had gathered. "What was gray with age," was to men no longer "godlike." Bold questions were put to all forms of religion, political institutions, and social arrangements. A new train of thoughts, hopes, fears, and sentiments, passed into the heart and brain of society, and became the inspiration of its literature. Events were constantly occurring, to which no parallel could be found in European

history; fierce and turbulent contests, on the field of battle or in the halls of debate, kept curiosity and wonder constantly awake.

It is evident, that such a time as this was not the period for florid imbecilities and harmonious sentimentalities, — for lines addressed to imaginary Chloes and Daphnes, and for the fooleries of courtly affectation. There was a sturdy democracy of readers demanding something more fiery and daring, or something more hearty and true. The naked energy of unchecked passions for once had full play. Great revolutions, threatening the ancient order of things, and promising the reconstruction of the world, opened fresh fields for the imagination. There had been no period in modern history when those mighty external causes generally supposed to stimulate the powers of the poet into intensest action, were in such uncontrollable operation as in the interval between the years 1790 and 1820. During that period, but principally in the last ten years of it, the great works of imagination which are the glory of our time appeared. In them we discover all the conservative and radical elements which were rife among the people, sublimed by genius.

It is certain that the moral agencies which the Revolution awoke were among its most marked results. It led to the study and assertion of first principles, and to their promulgation with all the combined energy of reason, imagination, and passion. If the spiritual element to which we have before alluded had not pervaded the poetry of the time, it is probable that mere passion would have been predominant, and that the literature would have "foamed itself to air." As it was, almost all the characteristics of the age were reflected in its poetry

The sentiment of humanity, of freedom, of sorrow, of disquietude, — all the virtues, sins, errors, faith, scepticisms, of the time, — its good and its evil, its happiness and misery, its religion and irreligion, — are seen, in a greater or less degree, in the works of Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Southey, Coleridge, and many of less note. We also perceive a prevailing earnestness and intensity of feeling, in some cases rising to agony and desperation, in these writings. Most of them display the individual peculiarities of their authors, and are colored by personal feelings. Each opens some new mines of imagination, or penetrates deeper into those but partially explored. The intellectual energy displayed in most of them is in fine contrast with the feebleness and timid elegance of the poets they supplanted. Even those who differ most in the character of their minds and opinions, appear influenced by similar causes. The whole literature, indeed, gives evidence of the mighty commotions of the period in which it was produced, and of the numerous agencies which concurred in its formation. In no other age of the world's history were poets characterized by so much subjective action of the mind, and such marked individuality; yet in no other age did they represent so truly the character and tendencies of common feeling and opinion.

First in point of time, and, in the opinion of many first in point of genius, among the poets of this period we must place Wordsworth, the pioneer of the new school, for many years its martyr, and now its patriarch. His life, for the last fifty years, has been spent in thinking, writing, and acting poetry. To him, more than to any other, are we indebted for the return of the divine art to its true domain, — the soul of man and external nature.

Born, as he boasts, in a mountainous country, and exposed from his youth to the influences of sublime and ennobling scenery, he early discovered the difference between the poetry of words and the poetry of things. He was fitted by nature and education for the duties and trials of a reformer. More disposed to look within than without for guidance and approval; plain, manly, independent; unconquerable by injustice or even by ridicule; and free from that servitude to popular caprice which makes the popular author of to-day and the forgotten author of to-morrow; he was eminently calculated to exercise that moral pride which enables a poet to defy contemporary criticism, to retort contemporary scorn, and to labor on a work "in the full assurance that it would be unpopular, and in the full assurance that it would be immortal." His theory of poetic diction, which discarded the peculiar language and jargon of verse, and substituted for it the language of real life, sprang from the simplicity and sincerity of his nature; and if we take his own style as the illustration of the true scope and meaning of his system, we can there discover its strongest defence; for though his diction may lack the incessant glow and glare of Byron's and Shelley's, it is never, in his best works, deficient in splendor and compass. He seems to have begun life with a determination to take nothing at second-hand. It was his object to look nature and man directly in the face, and record his impressions of both without regard to established metrical customs. He was undoubtedly one-sided in the view he took of many of his predecessors; but the evils against which he contended were so great, that nothing but the extreme opposite to the prevailing fashions could correct them. The same enthusiasm and energy of will which

make a man a reformer, make him likewise something of a fanatic.

In his youth, Wordsworth partook of the golden hopes of universal emancipation current among all the imaginative minds of his day; and, with Coleridge and Southey, consumed much time in building Utopian theories of government and "pantisocracies," out of the very inanities of democracy. They all had an open sense for whatever was poetical in the contests and opinions springing from the French Revolution. Their theories of poetry, though at first somewhat narrow, possessed the advantage of erring in the right direction. They spurned at the old tricks and gauds of diction, and adopted homeliness in their language, as well as in many of their subjects. Nature was the goddess of their adoration. Men and women, as distinguished from lords and ladies, they delighted to honor. They were liberal almost to illiberality. Their adventurous daring consisted in attempting to make those persons and objects which produce physical disgust the means of poetic pleasure. They put souls into dogs, horses, rabbits, and other equally intelligent brutes, and made them the organs of juster sentiments than were uttered in "polite" society. All animals seemed nobler in their eyes than fops and fribbles, though, by a course of very subtile reasoning, fops and fribbles can be demonstrated to be human beings. Indeed, they appeared as the advocates of all things that had fallen under the tyranny of prejudice and opinion. They adopted the quarrel of man and nature against men and society. They were the true democrats of poetry, and, for the first time, in their writings, the *sans-culottes* trod on poetic feet. All the great virtues and dear immunities of human nature, self-denial, love, char-

ity, faith, piety, they delighted to represent in the poor and the ignorant, — in those whom poetry before had merely pitied, and whom the dainty spirits of a former age had even stigmatized as "low." They forsook palaces for huts, and were eminently poets of the poor. Neither rags, nor coarseness of dress and manners, nor even bad taste and worse grammar, could conceal from these literary innovators the inborn grandeur and beauty of the human soul. They committed many errors, and slid into some puerilities; but they deserve the highest praise for passing by the delusions of conventional glitter and pomp, to pour out the full freshness of their young hearts, and the full richness of their beneficent imaginations, on objects which pride had before denied to be worthy of poetic adornment; and, by that consecrating power which belongs only to genius, to cast the drapery of the beautiful over what was externally mean and unsightly.

It would be no pleasant task to describe the steps by which these three juvenile republicans became tories. From their companionship in youth, they were classed together as poets after a more extensive range over the domain of reason and imagination had separated them in taste and manner. Wordsworth alone seems to have adhered steadily to his poetical principles. In his case, the child was ever "the father of the man." To him, we think, belongs the praise of giving its distinctive spiritual character to the imaginative literature of the age. His position is so prominent among the poets of his time that it cannot be overlooked. Verbal critics may be shocked at some of his phrases, and deny him any merit on account of a few trivial epithets. Worldlings may sneer at the simplicity of some of his delineations of

rural life. Truculent poetasters, boiling over with the frenzy of a pot-house inspiration, may charge him with a lack of power. But the fact remains that few poets of the present age have escaped his influence, and that he has stamped the character of his muse indelibly on their writings. He gave, or largely assisted in giving, that tendency to the poetic mind which produced, at a later period, the magnificent creations of Byron and Shelley.

The originality of Wordsworth, and the priority of his claims to be considered the leader of the poets of his time, we should be inclined to base on the lines written in 1798, during a visit to the ruins of Tintern Abbey. There is one passage in this poem which is, perhaps, the most remarkable in his writings. After describing the manner in which the forms and colors of nature affected his youth, and the "dizzy raptures and aching joys" to which they ministered, when they were to him "as an appetite, and haunted him like a passion," — when, in his enjoyment of their beauty and grandeur, they needed no interest "unborrowed of the eye," — he proceeds to indicate the new aspect under which they appear to him, since

> "Impulses of deeper birth
> Have come to him in solitude,"

and his mind has held mysterious communion with their inward spirit: —

> "For I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
> A Presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime

> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things."

It certainly was a great advance from Pope for a poet to have "an appetite and a passion" for external nature. But this alone would not have constituted any peculiar claim to originality. In the "sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused," in the feeling, that, behind the forms, hues, and sounds, of the material universe, there is something more than meets the external senses, —something which defies analysis, undefined and ineffable, which must be felt and perceived by the soul, — in this intense spiritualism, mingled with the mildest and sweetest humanity, we see the influence, and acknowledge the power, of Wordsworth. No such feeling seems to have stirred the consciousness of Pope, of Gray, of Collins, of Goldsmith, of Burns, or of Cowper; and it is doubtful if it can be found in the great poems of the Elizabethan era. To some, it may appear nothing more than the poetry of pantheism. To some, it may seem utterly unintelligible. It was a greater stumbling-block in the way of the northern critics of Wordsworth than his alleged vulgarities and trivialities. But nothing is more certain than that it is this spirit which now pervades the highest branches of imaginative literature, and is the inspiration of many a passage in Byron which is read with continual delight. It has passed from the summits of poetry to mingle with the interests and contests of society. It is, perhaps, the unconscious inspirer both of much of the radicalism and much of the conservatism of

the age. It affects the theological, the metaphysical, and even the physical speculations of the day. In theology, it is the parent of many a hotly contested dispute on "the spirit and the letter" of Christianity. Indeed, the disposition, everywhere observable, to look beneath the forms to the spirit, not only of nature, but of institutions and modes of faith, is the same in substance with that which is expressed in the celebrated lines of Wordsworth. This habit has led to some queer developments, where it has been unsparingly exercised.

In this transcendental region of poetry, Wordsworth is rather a listener than a seer. He hears unearthly tones rather than sees unearthly shapes. The vagueness and indistinctness of the impression which the most beautiful and sublime passages of his works leave upon the mind is similar to that which is conveyed by the most exquisite music. His is not often the Thought

"Which pierces this dim universe like *light*."

His description of indefinite emotions and subtile ideas is so expressed as to be heard by the soul, rather than seen by mental vision. It awakes a certain mysterious and unspeakable delight, which we can refer to none of the common sources of emotion. To one who is insensible to the mystical charm of Wordsworth's writings, — who is incapable of receiving pleasure except from palpable images and turbulent passions, — a great part of the beauty of his finest poetry must be lost. Few have ever exceeded him in the exquisite delicacy of his sense of sound. Those passages

"Through which the ear converses with the heart"

are, in his nature, ever open to external tones and voices. In his own words,

"A spirit aerial
Informs the cell of hearing;"

and this spiritual functionary translates to his soul all the music of the universe into the language of the affections and the imagination. It hears

"Humanity, in groves and fields,
Pipe solitary anguish;"

it enables him to perceive

"The voice of Deity, on height and plain,
Whispering those truths in stillness, which the WORD
To the four quarters of the world proclaims;"

it declares that "innumerable voices" fill the heavens "with everlasting harmony," and that

"The towering headlands crowned with mist,
Their feet among the billows, know
That Ocean is a mighty harmonist;
Thy pinions, everlasting Air,
Ever waving to and fro,
Are delegates of harmony, and bear
Strains that support the seasons in their round;
Stern winter loves a dirge-like sound;"

it feels the mysterious power of music, and gives significance to that

"Warbled air,
Whose piercing sweetness can unloose
The chains of frenzy, or entice a smile
Into the ambush of despair;"

it reveres Duty as the "stern daughter of the Voice of God," and knows

"A Voice to light gave being;
To time, and Man, his earth-born chronicler;
A voice shall finish doubt and dim foreseeing,
And sweep away life's visionary stir."

In that most refined of imaginations, —

> "Beauty born of murmuring sound,
> Did pass into her face," —

we are even more impressed with the marvellous delicacy of the "spirit aerial" in detecting the most mysterious and recondite influences of tone.

In this faculty of awaking sentiments of grandeur, sublimity, beauty, affection, devotion, in the mind of the reader, by giving voice and soul to unintelligent, and often to inanimate things, and making them act upon the mind through the subtilest feelings of our nature, it would be difficult to find a parallel to Wordsworth. It is evident, however, that the fineness of his imaginations requires thought and attention in the reader, to be perceived and appreciated. For this reason he has never been widely popular. Few are willing to abstract their minds from the daily routine of life, and bring them into harmony with that of the poet. Wordsworth wrote as if all other men looked upon the universe with his eyes. It has been well remarked, that what he said like a recluse, Lord Byron said like a man of the world. The men of the world called the former a meaningless mystic, and the latter an inspired bard.

Wordsworth did not consider poetry merely as an instrument of pleasure, as a thing which men should write or read in their hours of recreation; but he deemed it an art, to which a long life might be profitably devoted, and that, if need were, it should have its martyrs as well as its disciples. Religion, government, society, science, philosophy, life, he observed through a poetic medium. The imagination he considered the most divine of our

faculties. He gave to its visions the authenticity of revelations. It conducted the soul to heights which yielded

"Far stretching views into eternity."

God, man, and the universe, could be read aright only through the vision of this marvellous power. "It is conscious," he remarks, "of an indestructible dominion; — *the soul may fall away from it*, not being able to endure its grandeur; but if once felt and acknowledged, by no act of any other faculty of the mind can it be relaxed, impaired, or diminished." The understanding ever leads astray, when it denies and rejects the imagination. It resolves everything into unconnected parts; it never, unaided, can penetrate to unity. "The pride of intellect and thought" he is continually rebuking, and continually bringing up to its view mysteries which it cannot explain. He says, in reference to some of the "great discoverers" in physical and mental science,

"O, there is laughter at their work in heaven!"

and he exclaims,

"Inquire of ancient wisdom; go, demand
Of mighty Nature, if 't was ever meant
That we should pry far off, yet be unraised;
That we should pore, and dwindle as we pore,
Viewing all objects unremittingly
In disconnection, dead and spiritless;
And still dividing and dividing still,
Break down all grandeur, still unsatisfied
With the perverse attempt, while littleness
May yet become more little; waging thus
An impious warfare with the very life
Of our own souls. And if, indeed, there be
An all-pervading Spirit, upon whom
Our dark foundations rest, could he design

> That this magnificent effect of power,
> The earth we tread, the sky that we behold
> By day, and all the pomp which night reveals,
> That these — and that superior mystery,
> Our vital frame, so fearfully devised,
> And the dread soul within it — should exist
> Only to be examined, pondered, searched,
> Probed, vexed, and criticized?"

It has been supposed that the Supreme Being whom Wordsworth contemplates is *produced* by the imagination and affections. Some, who have objected, on this supposition, to "The Excursion," as a work which accomplishes nothing in divinity and philosophy, have overlooked one important distinction in the poet's notion of imagination. This faculty, with him, not only combines, creates, produces, but is gifted with insight into the objective realities of the spiritual world. It sees and hears, as well as makes. In one of his sonnets, he refers to it as overleaping walls and gulfs of mystery to the Infinite object.

> "The universe is infinitely wide,
> And conquering reason, if self-glorified,
> Can nowhere move uncrossed by some new wall
> Or gulf of mystery, which thou alone,
> Imaginative Faith! canst overleap,
> In progress toward the fount of Love."

With this high sense of the uses of the imagination, with this idea of his art as

> "The vision and the faculty divine,"

it is not singular that Wordsworth's self-reliance was never shaken by calumny, sarcasm, and neglect. He felt that he had a great purpose to perform in life, and he bent his energies to it unshrinkingly. He lived in times of vast excitement and turmoil, when the fountains of the

great deep of opinion were broken up, and the world was in disorder and commotion, deluged with all varieties of sects and systems. There was an incessant activity of the mind and passions, without any definite resting-place. There was vehemence in asserting and defending opinions, without an assured faith in their truth. The material and spiritual elements at work in society were mutually clashing. He had experienced deeply these outward influences, though the fineness of his affections had preserved him from their harsher manifestations. His writings must be considered with reference to the state of opinion and the outward events of his time. Even when his mind seems most abstracted from real life, and flutters dizzy over the vanishing points of human intelligence, we can perceive that his lofty idealism is assumed for the purpose of opposing some modes of thought, or orthodoxies of action, which he deemed the sins and follies of the period. There is a controversial air around his poetry. The pressure of surrounding circumstances evidently quickened his intellect, not to give an echo, but a warning. He desired to teach a philosophy of the whole nature of man, in which the imagination and the affections should be predominant, and by which the relation of man and the external universe to each other and to God, might be displayed "in words that move in metrical array." He hoped to soothe and harmonize the soul, by opening to it unexplored regions of loveliness and delight; by accustoming it to the contemplation of the majesty of the universe; by showing the essential littleness implied in the indulgence of stormy individual passions; and by healing those miseries which have their sources in the fret and stir of conventional life. He saw that a vast proportion of the

calamities of existence arise from the exaggerated estimate which each individual makes of himself, and the desire of "each to be all." For this individualism he would substitute the sentiment of humanity. No one yields to him in the loftiness of his views respecting the capacity and destiny of the human soul; yet he is careful to preserve this from the taint of vanity and pride.

Wordsworth professes to find the materials of poetry in the common and familiar things of existence. We think that, in a majority of cases, these common and familiar things are made poetical by his own mind. He superadds more than he evolves. He sees objects as they are blended with his own thoughts and imaginations. The common, to him, is full of mystery, and is linked by a chain of mysterious association with the most exalted and kindling truths. Beauty, sublimity and romance, are, to his mind, confined to no period or country, but are ever the attendants of man and nature.

> "Paradise and groves
> Elysian, Fortunate Fields, — like those of old
> Sought in the Atlantic main, — why should they be
> A history only of departed things,
> Or a mere fiction of what never was?
> For the discerning intellect of man,
> When wedded to this goodly universe
> In love and holy passion, shall find these
> A simple produce of the common day.
> I, long before the blissful hour arrives,
> Would chant, in lonely peace, the spousal verse
> Of this great consummation; and by words
> *Which speak of nothing more than what we are,*
> Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep
> Of death, and win the vacant and the vain
> To noble raptures."

In the same spirit he speaks of the beautiful.

> "Beauty, — *a living Presence of the earth*,
> Surpassing the most fair ideal forms
> Which craft of delicate spirits hath composed
> From earth's materials, — waits upon my steps,
> *Pitches her tents before me as I move*,
> An hourly neighbor."

We perceive throughout Wordsworth a kind of unconscious distinction preserved between man and men. There is no limit to his confidence in the first, but he is inclined to scan the second with distrust and suspicion. In one of Godwin's essays, reference is made to some rascal "who has the audacity to call himself A MAN." In Wordsworth's mind there appears something of this feeling, though in a milder form. The conventional man, whose nature is distorted by the world's vices both in action and speculation, and who is unwedded to the universe in "love and holy passion," is a perversion of man. Hence his strong tendency to consider the elements of human nature, rather than human nature as modified by society. Hence his lack of dramatic power. He is a moral critic of men, rather than a delineator of character. When he takes pedlers and potters for heroes, they are not those of real life, but pedlers and potters after a type in his own imagination. And even then they have little congruity, except that which comes from the didactic unity of their acts and discourses. Ever aiming at man in the simplicity of his nature, all that can be said of his characters is, that they are not men, but man, — and man after Wordsworth's image.

Much has been written in praise of Wordsworth's philosophy. If we consider philosophy as the product principally of the understanding, — as an induction from facts carefully collected and rigidly analyzed, — it seems to us that Wordsworth's claims to distinction among met-

aphysicians must be small. He does not reason up to principles, or down from principles, but he proclaims and asserts principles. A reasoner would not be influenced at all by the theories of God and the universe scattered over his works. In short, he pursues the poetic rather than the philosophic method. His disposition to sneer at exclusive reason, and his deficiency in that dramatic imagination by which a poet conceives beings differently constituted from himself, and lives for the time their thoughts and feelings, would naturally narrow his philosophy of human life to the range of his own experience, and restrict the authority of his metaphysical teachings to those whose minds saw things in the same light in which they were viewed by himself. Shelley says, that a man "to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another, and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own." Now, the pains and pleasures of the species Wordsworth desires to make his own; but in making them his own, he makes them *Wordsworthian.* The pains and pleasures that the race ought to feel, rather than those which they do feel, are represented in his writings. And it is the same with Shelley.

But the objection which would be made to Wordsworth as a philosopher, is the inconsistency of his statements. From the observation of certain mental phenomena, awakened by some mysterious external influences, the Platonic doctrine of preëxistence has been inferred, the contemplations of other philosophers have led them to pantheism; the meditations of others have resulted in the acknowledgment of a Supreme Infinite Being. Now, in Wordsworth, we perceive each of these systems

poetically stated. They have a poetical consistency, as they were the melodious utterances of the bard, when the phenomena from which each is inferred pressed most heavily on his spirit. But it is evident that a philosopher would have attempted to harmonize these by a process of reasoning. He would never have admitted them into his system, without modifying the character of each in such a manner that they would form one consistent theory. But with the poet it is different. He feels more intensely at some periods than he does at others the different states of mind which each system represents, and he pours out the thoughts and impulses of the moment as if they constituted his whole nature. He sees or thinks he sees, hears, or thinks he hears, in the visible or in the transcendental world, certain spiritual realities; and he gives them shape, sound, or hue, without regard to their limitations in reason.

The intensity with which Wordsworth undoubtedly meditates has probably done much to give him a great reputation as a reasoner; but between reasoning and meditation we conceive there is a marked difference, especially in the action of a poetical mind. We believe, that, if "The Excursion" were stripped of its radiant dress of imagination, and reduced to a plain prose treatise on ethics and metaphysics, it would be acknowledged to contain many common and important, and many subtile, truths; but to present, on the whole, quite an unphilosophical blending of assertion and deduction, resulting in inharmonious and contradictory theories.

It is as a poet, therefore, rather than as a philosopher, that Wordsworth is to be considered; for when he deals with the themes of philosophy, he pursues the poetical method. The question, whether this method be the cor-

rect one, or whether the things which it proclaims from insight be entitled to rank among facts, we shall not discuss. The confidence which men will place in them will depend on the notions they entertain of the scope of the imagination, and the measure in which they themselves possess it. The pleasure, likewise, which will be experienced from Wordsworth's poetry, will depend on the sympathies which the reader has in common with the poet. To persons either of fiery sensibility or cold understanding it would give but little satisfaction. To one it would appear tame, to the other mystical. Though his writings are not barren of those bursts of fine frenzy which we all love to consider as characteristic of the bard, his nature is rather contemplative than impulsive. His imagination is most affluent when it is pervaded by a calm, yet intense and lofty, spirit of meditation; and its productions, therefore, do not seem so spontaneous as if they gushed out in a stream of passionate feeling, under the influence of uncontrollable excitement. Indeed, in his most elevated flights, his soul seems humbled and awed before the Presence into which it comes, and hesitates to bring the fierce fire of human passions into regions, "to which the heaven of heavens is but a veil." He is above the tempests and turbulence of life, and moves in regions where serenity is strength, and where he can perceive the "central peace"

> "Subsisting at the heart
> Of endless agitation."

The height and intensity of his feeling destroy the appearance of power, even when penetrated by its essence. In reading poetry, we are in danger of being deluded into panegyric by mere sound. Carlyle truly says, that "we do not call that man strong who takes convulsion

fits, though in that state ten men cannot hold him." The broad, deep river of song, having its fountain in the human heart, and flowing onward to the one great ocean, may make less noise in its progress than the glittering rivulet, which babbles and chatters the whole of its shallow way. But the rivulet dries up in the sun; the river flows on forever.

Wordsworth, as a delineator of the heart, is not so successful with the passions as with the affections. He has little of the Titan spirit in his constitution. His passion is "holy passion," — affection rendered intense by thought and imagination, and denuded of its strictly physical and earthly qualities. There is an indescribable holiness and tenderness in his illustrations of the affections. The occasional puerilities of expression in his early poems are not sufficient to break the charm they exercise on susceptible minds. We feel, in reading them, the exquisite delicacy of his perception of the heart's immunities. There is no grade of life or being, which does not rise in our estimation and love, after it has been consecrated by his feelings. The beauty, dignity, and worth of human nature, are more powerfully impressed upon our minds, after being thus taught the greatness and tenderness of which it is capable, in the exercise of its most common attributes. We are made to feel that the unselfish affections are always to be honored and admired, as much in the humble and uninstructed, as in the noble and most intelligent; that self-devotion is a greater thing than self-aggrandizement, though the former exist in a peasant, and the latter in a prince. Wordsworth's power of abstracting the sentiment from the circumstances which surround it, and making it stand out in the pure light of its own

nature, is one prominent cause of the effect it has upon the feelings. A dramatist would include in his representation the whole character of the individual possessing it; and if there were anything in its accompaniments to awaken other emotions, they would have their due place; so that the result upon the reader would closely resemble that of an incident in real life. We all know that the sight of poverty and distress is not always unaccompanied by ludicrous sensations, and that there is often as much to excite disgust as pity. All persons are not able to survey humility, faith, and self-sacrifice, in the poor and unintelligent, with the pure feeling of respect. The taste, cultivation, and associations of the observer, modify his perception of these qualities in others. But Wordsworth would impress us with so deep a veneration for them, that, when recognized in any form, they should not only be sacred from ridicule, but should make us feel our own littleness in comparison. It is this very absence of dramatic power, this devotion to the thing itself, without regard to our associations growing out of the accidents of its situation, which confers upon Wordsworth's delineations of the affections so much potency. They form an era in the life of every man who reads them. They teach that man has a property in his affections, which should be as sacred from violation as any which the law protects. Their influence is felt unconsciously by many who have read only to deride. On some men, we have no doubt, they have wrought a complete revolution in the feelings with which they regarded their fellow-beings. Their extensive circulation would be desired not only by the lovers of beauty and sentiment, but by all who would break down the barriers of selfishness, distrust, and pride, which sepa-

rate man from man. We believe that they are yet destined to exert, either directly or indirectly, a vast and beneficial influence upon society, by their agency in the imperceptible changes wrought in the manners and feelings of men, through the diffusion of just and beautiful sentiments of benevolence, charity, and love.

The grace, purity, and harmony, which the fineness of Wordsworth's affections often lends to his style and thought, are in the highest degree poetical. It would be an easy labor to fill many pages in illustration. In "Vaudracour and Julia," we have the following description of love, which, for simplicity and truth, and the fine blending of imagination with feeling, so as to soften passion into beauty without shearing it of its strength, can hardly be excelled.

> "Arabian fiction never filled the world
> With half the wonders that were wrought for him.
> Earth breathed in one great presence of the spring;
> Life turned the meanest of her implements,
> Before his eyes, to price above all gold;
> The house she dwelt in was a sainted shrine;
> Her chamber window did surpass in glory
> The portals of the dawn; all paradise
> Could, by the simple opening of a door,
> Let itself in upon him; pathways, walks,
> Swarmed with enchantment, till his spirit sank,
> Surcharged, within him, — overblest to move
> Beneath a sun that wakes a weary world
> To its dull round of ordinary cares;
> A man too happy for mortality!"

The following sonnet appears to us to present a singular combination of the most powerful and intense meditation with the utmost sweetness of feeling.

> "It is a beauteous evening, calm and free;
> The holy time is quiet as a nun
> Breathless with adoration; the broad sun

Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of heaven is on the sea;
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder — everlastingly.
Dear child! dear girl! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear'st untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worshipp'st at the temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not."

The closing stanzas of the poem which succeeds have witching delicacy and grace of feeling and expression, which alone would enable Wordsworth to find his way into every loving heart.

A POET'S EPITAPH.

"Art thou a statesman, in the van
Of public business trained and bred? —
First learn to love one living man;
Then mayst thou think upon the dead.

"A lawyer art thou? — draw not nigh;
Go, carry to some fitter place
The keenness of that practised eye,
The hardness of that sallow face.

"Art thou a man of purple cheer, —
A rosy man, right plump to see? —
Approach; yet, Doctor, not too near;
This grave no cushion is for thee.

"Or art thou one of gallant pride,
A soldier, and no man of chaff! —
Welcome! — but lay thy sword aside,
And lean upon a peasant's staff.

"Physician art thou? one, all eyes,
Philosopher? a fingering slave,
One that would peep and botanize
Upon his mother's grave?

"Wrapt closely in thy sensual fleece,
O, turn aside, and take, I pray,
That he below may rest in peace,
That abject thing, thy soul, away!

"A moralist perchance appears;
Led, Heaven knows how! to this poor sod;
And he has neither eyes nor ears;
Himself his world, and his own God;

"One to whose smooth-rubbed soul can cling
Nor form, nor feeling, great or small;
A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,
An intellectual All-in-all!

"Shut close the door; press down the latch;
Sleep in thy intellectual crust;
Nor lose ten tickings of thy watch
Near this unprofitable dust.

"But who is he, with modest looks,
And clad in homely russet brown?
He murmurs near the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own.

"He is retired as noontide dew,
Or fountain in a noonday grove;
And you must love him, ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.

"The outward shows of sky and earth,
Of hill and valley, he has viewed;
And impulses of deeper birth
Have come to him in solitude.

"In common things that round us lie
Some random truths he can impart,—
The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

"But he is weak, both man and boy,
Hath been an idler in the land;
Contented if he might enjoy
The things which others understand.

"Come hither in thy hour of strength;
Come, weak as is a breaking wave!
Here stretch thy body at full length,
Or build thy house upon this grave."

As far as any of Wordsworth's poems are narratives, they are narratives of thoughts and emotions, rather than actions. Meditation, imagination, and description, generally commingled in their operation, and bearing everywhere the legible impress of his own individuality, appear to be the characteristics of his poems. In the invention of character and incident he is deficient. The skeletons of his narratives present few points of interest and novelty. The filling up constitutes their value. "Peter Bell" is an example, the story being simply this. A vulgar potter, journeying through a wood, spies an ass kneeling beside a stream, and forms the intention of appropriating him to his own use. He mounts him, but the animal refuses to move, and his firmness is not shaken by the most furious blows. It appears that the ass is keeping watch on the spot where his master has fallen into the water, and that he has been there three or four days without food. Peter is affected by what he sees, comes to an understanding with the animal, is conducted to the house of the drowned man, informs his wife and children of the accident, is touched to the heart by their sorrow, muses desperately for some time on his condition, and

"After ten months' melancholy,
Becomes a good and honest man."

This is what may be called the story of the poem, and it seems sufficiently puerile. There are many stanzas, likewise, which are calculated to relax the most rigid

muscles of the most rigid Wordsworthian. But the poem, considered as a whole, and viewed in regard to its meditations and descriptions, is grand and beautiful. In the peculiar excellence of some of its details, it would be difficult to find its parallel. The description of Peter's intellectual and corporeal frame, and the external influences to which he was subjected in the formation and redemption of his character, is exact, and highly imaginative, both in conception and expression. The manner in which nature and human life are calculated to affect a heart naturally callous, and minister to its worst feelings, is traced with skilful power.

"To all the unshaped, half-human thoughts
Which solitary Nature feeds
'Mid summer storms or winter's ice,
Had Peter joined whatever vice
The cruel city breeds.
* * * *
"He had a dark and sidelong walk,
And long and slouching was his gait;
Beneath his looks, so bare and bold,
You might perceive his spirit cold
Was playing with some inward bait."

The skeleton of the story hardly rises above that of a nursery tale; the thoughts, emotions, and imaginations, which it includes, are in the highest spirit of a profound poetical philosophy.

The ridicule which has been heaped upon Wordsworth for the occasional singularities and tastelessness of his diction, we have no desire to echo. The courage with which he bore both it and the unpopularity which it excited, is one sign, at least, that the faults were not mere affectations. His works were successively received by the dominant critics in Edinburgh with a wild peal

of elvish laughter, which rang far and wide over Great Britain; but he still labored patiently on, with a devout willingness to bide his time. To attack him with the weapon of ridicule was, indeed,

> "Tilting with a straw
> Against a champion cased in adamant."

In truth, Wordsworth's insensibility to ridicule was, to some extent, the source of many of the faults which provoked it. He seems to have had, comparatively, no appreciation of the ludicrous. He was too grave and earnest himself to calculate the effect of certain phrases and modes of expression upon minds which associated ideas differently. If a subject seemed to him dignified by innate properties, or a word appeared to him picturesque or expressive, he did not inquire how it would be regarded by others. He dwelt too much in his own mind, brooded too intensely over his own consciousness, lived a life too much apart from the flippancies and vivacities of society, to appreciate the condition of minds differently constituted, and subjected to different influences. The insignificant number of his violations of the established decencies of diction is, when we consider this fact, a good proof of his natural taste. The dishonesty of his adversaries consisted in quoting detached fragments of his works as characteristic of the whole, and thus misrepresenting him to the public. Imaginations that "soared into the highest heaven of invention," thoughts of imperishable worth and grandeur, images of almost unspeakable beauty, sentiments of heavenly grace and purity, sweet humanities, calculated to find a home in every earnest heart, were overlooked or scoffed at, except by the pickpockets of letters, because they were

sometimes accompanied by errors of taste and diffuseness of expression. Of course, such conduct made his few sympathizing readers champions of his errors of taste, and defenders of his diffuseness of expression.

The character and influence of Wordsworth have, indeed, been doomed to suffer almost as much from the raptures of his disciples as from the sarcasms of his adversaries. Men who could see nothing but puerilities in his "divine philosophy," and men who could see nothing but "divine philosophy" in his puerilities, have both contributed to injure his reputation. The injustice he experienced from the sneering critics naturally changed his admirers into partisans. To settle his position in the sliding scale of English poets was a task of some difficulty; to call him a dreaming old woman, or a Heaven-inspired prophet, required but a glib motion of the tongue. or a few dashes of the pen. Consequently, he was not judged, but abused and eulogized; ridiculed in newspapers and quoted in sermons; a butt for the reviews and a pet for the parsons. For a number of years, the author of "Peter Bell" and "The Excursion," works replete with elevation of thought and grandeur of imagination, was believed by many lovers of poetry to be a queer old gentleman, residing somewhere about the Lakes in Westmoreland, and spending his time, like Irving's Dutch burgomaster, in doing a deal of unintelligible thinking, and catching at ideas by the tail. He was accused of laboring under the melancholy delusion, that he was the only poet of his day, and of putting forth certain quantities of mystical trash every year to sustain his pretensions; and of reproducing in the literature of the nineteenth century, those curious legends of John Spratt and Master Horner.

which had already been immortalized in the lyrics of an equally gifted old woman.

Lord Byron favored these unfounded prejudices by all the means in his power. It was policy in him to profess ignorance of Spenser, and contempt of Wordsworth. His remark on "The Excursion" is characteristic. "It was clumsy, and frowsy, and his aversion." He acknowledged that there was "some talent spilt over it; but it was like rain upon rocks, which falls and stagnates, or rain upon sands, which falls without fertilizing." He knew well how to seize upon those peculiarities of a poet which he thought calculated to be popular, and, after disguising them in the splendid apparel of his own diction, and infusing into them the marvellous energy of his own passions, to represent their original proprietor as worthy only of his lordly sarcasm and disdain. His conduct in this respect reminds us of what Dryden says of Ben Jonson's plagiarisms: — "He has done his robberies so openly that we see he fears not to be taxed by any law. He invades authors like a monarch, and what would be theft in any other poet is only victory in him."

Jeffrey's criticisms on Wordsworth, in the Edinburgh Review, probably contributed more than anything else to the comparative neglect with which his poems were treated by the public. These criticisms it is curious to read now, after they have lost all their sting, and are monuments only of the writer's brilliancy and bitterness. It would be wrong to assert that they do not contain some just remarks; but those who defend them overlook one important fact. Nobody complains that they ridiculed some perversities of the poet's taste, but that they also scoffed at the finest products of his peculiar genius. The "Ode to Duty," and the ode on the "Intimations

of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," receive little better treatment than such couplets as this: —

> "A household tub, like one of those
> Which women use to wash their clothes."

The *critique* on "The Excursion" is, with all its cleverness, one of the most flippant, shallow, and inconsistent essays ever written. Some of the best passages in the poem, — that, for instance, which describes the sensations of the "growing youth,"

> "When, from the naked top
> Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun
> Rise up, and bathe the world in light," —

are quoted only to be dismissed with the title of "stuff." It is the incapacity to discern merit, not the exposure of a few errors, which has turned these criticisms from satires on Wordsworth to satires on their author. Jeffrey's subtilty was altogether of the understanding. The most refined processes of feeling and imagination were lost upon him. His talents were never employed to more disadvantage than when he attempted to criticize Wordsworth and Coleridge. The commiseration he expresses for the perversions of their genius, when he censures those very passages of their poems which are now considered the signs of their genius, appears at the present day more ludicrous than his most felicitous jests.

But a portion of Wordsworth's unpopularity in former years was undoubtedly owing to the faults of his own temper and disposition. That his writings did not sooner begin their ministry of good to the people, must be attributed in some degree to himself. He gave his adversaries the advantage over him, by adhering to

faults of taste which he knew would be ridiculed. Besides, he had been in his youth a republican. He became afterwards a conservative, and, at times, volunteered his opinions on political matters with no small bitterness of expression. He seemed to rely too much on the "strength of backward-looking thoughts," and to be too deeply impressed with the "care prospective of our wise forefathers," to please an age mad with excitement about the present and the future. His love for England and English institutions was too undiscerning. He celebrated in verse many events which were deemed ominous to the cause of liberty. In truth, when Wordsworth deals with virtue, freedom, justice, and truth, in the abstract, or blends them with majestic images drawn from the sublimest aspects of the universe, no poet can be more grand and impressive; but when he connects these with the acts and policy of the English tory politicians, or with the state and church of England, we are conscious that the analogy is false, if not ludicrous. Many have accordingly classed him with the poets of the past, rather than with the poets of the future, and have denied his claim to rank with those who sing prophecies of a new and better era for humanity. This opinion seems now to prevail, even among those who acknowledge the vast services he has performed to literature, and the importance of the revolution in poetry which he has done so much to achieve.

In our opinion this is a sophism, arising from a confusion of things essentially different. Wordsworth may be a politician of the past, but he is emphatically a poet of the future. We have already alluded to his lack of practical understanding, and his ignorance of the ways of men. He surveyed things through a poetical medium,

and did not, therefore, see them as they are, in the strict meaning of the term. His practical deductions are accordingly incorrect, for his premises are ideal. Lord Bacon's definition of poetry comprehends the whole matter. "Poetry serveth and conferreth to magnanimity, morality, and to delectation. And, therefore, it was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind." Now, Wordsworth, whether he appears to sing of the past or the present, is, in reality, singing of the future. His England of a thousand years past is the Utopia of a thousand years to come. It is false history and true poetry. If he give objective existence to the ideals of his mind in one point of space or time rather than another, the character of the ideal still remains the same. They are ideals which, in fact, have never been realized, and which accordingly relate to some period far in advance of our own. They refer to a state of society, which the lowness of the ideals of many who object to his conservatism incapacitates them from anticipating. If, by some perversity of vision, the poet thinks he sees his aspirations partly realized in a corrupt government or in slavish institutions, the blame is to be laid to his eye, not to his soul.

We will illustrate this by a few extracts. The sixth book of "The Excursion" begins thus: —

> "Hail to the crown, by Freedom shaped, to gird
> An English sovereign's brow! and to the throne
> Whereon he sits! whose deep foundations lie
> *In veneration and the people's love.*"

Now, this is false history. It is true of no government in existence. A politician, of either whig or tory principles, would despise himself for saying so verdant a

thing. It is, in fact, a prophecy of the time when the state will be so pure as to be seated in "veneration and a people's love." The salutation which follows, to the church, is to be interpreted with the same eye to a better condition of the morals and piety of the clergy. That this is the case may be seen from the sonnet to the memory of Milton, in 1802: —

> "Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour!
> England hath need of thee; she is a fen
> Of stagnant waters; *altar, sword, and pen,*
> *Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,*
> Have forfeited their ancient English dower
> Of inward happiness."

Here church, state, and the whole society of England, are represented as "a fen of stagnant waters." Now, both representations cannot be true; and yet both were undoubtedly projected from the poet's mind, and are significant, not of the real condition of his country, but of the change in his feelings from despondency to hope. There is no poetical inconsistency between the two. The last represents disgust at the present, arising from a comparison of the present with the ideal; the first represents the ideal projected upon the present. In both cases exaggeration is the natural result.

To prove that Wordsworth is not a poet of the future, we must prove that he did not advance beyond the present. Now, it would be difficult to name any contemporary poet whose ideals are higher than his. Lord Byron is generally considered his superior in this respect, because he had a harsh and jarring string in his lyre, and sang of revolution, and hailed the destruction of tyrants by the sword and the axe. In this respect, we humbly think that he was a poet of the past, for nothing can be

less original than this mode of disposing of the world's oppressors. The quickest, surest, most natural, and most common method of obtaining rights, is to kill him who deprives you of them. This, so far, has been the opinion of the human race, and has been expressed in divers ways at divers times. But one, in whose soul abide the eternal forms of beauty, goodness, truth, and virtue, — whose heart comprehends all mankind in its love, and thirsts for a period when universal benevolence will prevail upon the earth, — who would sing, "long before the blissful hour arrives," the peaceful triumph of good over evil, and right over wrong, — to such a one, the usual mode of despatching oppressors is apt to be distasteful. He may think, that, in the present condition of things, the common course has its advantages; but if he desires to impress on the hearts and imaginations of the people a model of a perfect state of society, he will, if he is a bard of the future, be likely to leave out some of the harsh and imperfect means and materials of the present. This, at least, was the feeling of Wordsworth and Shelley; and this, we humbly conceive, is the Christian feeling.

Wordsworth is considered a champion of monarchy and aristocracy. We do not know but that there may be opinions expressed in his writings which can be forced to bear a construction inimical to political liberty; still, if we consider the tendency of his whole works, we shall find them in the highest degree democratic. "The rights of man" is a phrase to which he gives a more extended application than could be given by any person of less extensive sympathies. Mercy, justice, wisdom, piety, love, freedom, in their full beauty and grandeur, are the subjects of his song; and we have yet to learn, that these

can subsist with the slightest injury done to a human being. Indeed, he professes to have

> "Sympathies
> Aloft ascending, and descending down,
> Even to inferior kinds;"

and to teach the last hyperbole of toleration, that

> "He who feels contempt
> For any living thing, hath faculties
> Which he has never used."

That Wordsworth was unsuccessful in commenting on the politics of the hour, and blundered often in applying his ideal standards to the wrong objects, we willingly admit; but we think this is an objection to him as a practical politician and philosopher, and not an objection to him as a poet, "submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind."

To estimate the degree of longevity which will attach to Wordsworth's poetry might be difficult; but as he has built upon the enduring rock as well as the shifting sand, we cannot tolerate the idea that he will be swept away with things forgotten. As we pause thoughtfully before some of the majestic fabrics of his genius, they seem to wear the look of eternity. And when we consider the vast debt of delight we owe to him, the new inspiration he poured into poetry, and his delivery of it from the bondage of a hundred and fifty years, — the many teasing persecutions he has endured for humanity and literature; — when we think of the consecrations he has shed upon our present existence, and the splendor of the vistas he has opened beyond the grave, — his desire to bring the harsh domain of the actual into closer vicinity to the sunny land of the ideal, — his kindling

strains for freedom and right, — his warm sympathy with all that elevates and ennobles our being, and the sway he has displayed over its holiest and tenderest affections, — and the many images of beauty and grace with which he has brightened our daily life; — when we consider these, his faults and errors seem to dwindle into insignificance; reverence and love leap to our lips, and warm from the heart and brain springs our benison,

> "Blessings be on him, and eternal praise,
> Who gave us nobler loves and nobler cares!"

BYRON.*

The revolution in the character of imaginative literature which has taken place in the present century had its most violent and convulsionary manifestation in Lord Byron. In an article on Wordsworth, in our last number, we referred to some of the external influences which stimulated the genius of the great poets of the age, and laid particular stress on spiritual philosophy and the French Revolution. These two agencies, of course, were modified by the individual peculiarities of the poets they influenced. Wordsworth, in whose temperament the thoughtful element predominated over the impulsive, impressed on them the qualities of his own nature; and their effect on him is seen in the preëminence given in his writings to spiritual things and to humanity, to the imagination and the affections. On Byron, whose mind was naturally more under the dominion of sensibility, and rendered almost chaotic by suffering and error, the radical influences flowing from the French Revolution operated with more power, and were controlled by less moral and humane feeling.

Indeed, if any person can be pointed out as the mouthpiece of the harsher revolutionary spirit of his time, it is

* The Works of Lord Byron in Verse and Prose, including his Letters, Journals, &c., with a Sketch of his Life. New York: A. V. Blake. 8vo. 1843. — *North American Review, January*, 1845

assuredly Lord Byron. The extraordinary popularity of his poems, and the notoriety of his life, have led to various essays on his character and writings, differing in object and mode of treatment, and all more or less one-sided. Denunciation and panegyric have both been lavished upon his name. Those who represent him as a fiend, darting with a sort of diabolical instinct on all that is bad and impious, and overthrowing with a kind of diabolical energy all that is good and holy, and those who represent him as little less than a saint, seem equally to err; and the error of both arises in a great degree from an attempt to delineate a character which shall be consistent with itself. Byron may almost be said to have had no character at all. Every attempt to bring his virtues or his vices within the boundaries of a theory, or to represent his conduct as guided by any predominant principle of good or evil, has been accompanied by blunders and perversions. His nature had no simplicity. He seems an embodied antithesis, — a mass of contradictions, — a collection of opposite frailties and powers. Such was the versatility of his mind and morals, that it is hardly possible to discern the connection between the giddy goodness and the brilliant wickedness which he delighted to exhibit. His habit of mystification, of darkly hinting remorse for sins he never committed, of avowing virtues he never practised, increases the difficulty. From his actions, his private journals and correspondence, his poems, — from all those sources whence we derive a consistent idea of other writers, — it is hard to obtain a harmonious notion of him. It is quite easy to sustain any theory of his character, good, bad, or indifferent, by numerous extracts from his writings and undoubted events of his life. Friends or enemies need not

droop for lack of materials to justify either blame or eulogy. Nothing can be more simple than to prove that all in character and life which is ennobling and humane, and all that is debasing and inhuman, from writing hymns to parodying the ten commandments, found in him an able champion; and that crime and goodness both glittered with new attractions, when seen through the dazzling medium of his diction. From his life and works we obtain the impression that he was a glutton, and an ascetic; a spendthrift, and a miser; a misanthrope, and a cosmopolite; an aristocrat, and a radical; an infidel, and a believer; a debauchee, and a mystic; a cynic, and a sentimentalist; a foul libeller of his species, and an eloquent defender of its rights, and a more eloquent mourner over its wrongs; bewailing and denouncing the literary revolution which made his own writings popular; pandering to a public which he despised; pilfering from authors whom he ridiculed; lashing his own bosom sins when committed by others; in short, a man continually busy in giving the lie to his thoughts, opinions, tastes, and conduct.

When we reflect upon this assemblage of clashing qualities, these odd irregularities of opinion and action, we are prone to consider him what somebody calls Voltaire, "a miraculous child." He appears a mere collection of veering fancies and impulses, making the voyage of life aimless and rudderless, blown about by every breeze of desire, tossed about on every wave of passion. We can find in him no fixed principle of good or evil; no thorough-going worship of god or devil. Yet this comfortable conclusion seems only to lead us deeper into the dilemma. Though apparently without any settled aim, no public man of his time could display a stronger

will, could adhere to a purpose with more fixed and sullen obstinacy, could act out or write out with more power whatever he deemed fit. No poet ever stamped upon his writings a deeper impress of personality, or viewed outward objects in a manner more peculiar to himself. Everything about him is intensely subjective, individual, Byronic, — whether writing "Childe Harold" or "Don Juan," — whether sipping the waters of Hippocrene, or the stronger waters of Holland and the Rhine.

In his relation with the public we perceive the same consistent inconsistency. He does not appear to have formed any distinct notions of the dignity or the importance of the poet's vocation. It would be difficult for the most acute analyst to detect in his writings his theory of human life. Some of his works were published merely, as he expresses it, to "make a row." Others were reflections of his moods, rather than his opinions. The volatile libertinism of Lucio, and the gloomy fierceness of Timon, he adopted at pleasure. Self is ever uppermost in his mind. The whole world is called upon to listen to a recital of the joys and agonies of George Gordon, Lord Byron. Amidst this most bewildering confusion of qualities and attributes, we are still conscious that one personality circles through and pervades them all. In his coquetry with the public, he seems at once a despot and a slave. He tells his thousands of readers that they are formed of more vulgar clay than himself, that he despises them from his inmost heart, that their life is passed in a bustling oscillation between knavery and folly, and that all mankind is but a "degraded mass of animated dust." Yet he demands their sympathy for all his idiosyncrasies, sins, and errors, and bends his stern pride to follow whatever path of popu-

larity changing circumstances may point out. His mouth is ever at the public ear, though it pour forth nothing but contempt and hatred. In whatever attitude he places himself, he evidently intends it to be one which shall excite admiration or horror. He could bear hatred, calumny, the imputation of profligacy, the denunciation of the powerful, the censures of the good, — anything which carried with it fuel for his sensibility; but he could not bear neglect or indifference. An expression of contempt for any one of his works excited his ire more than the most hyperbolical expression of horror. The cool cockney, who said that Don Juan was "all Billingsgate," was lifted immediately into importance by the remark.

This dependence on the world, even on the weakest portion of it, by one who professed, in his towering misanthropy, to be superior to its praise or blame, is in marked contrast with the self-reliance of Wordsworth and Shelley. It was one of Byron's maxims, that the censure of the meanest of mankind is more painful than the applause of the highest is pleasing. This was a singular opinion to be held by one who strove hard to rank himself among those "gigantic minds"

> "Whose steep aim
> Was, Titan-like, on daring doubts to pile
> Thoughts which should call down thunder and the flame
> Of Heaven."

The unsettled condition of Byron's mind and character may be traced, in a great degree, we think, to the errors and calamities of his life. His misfortunes, however, enabled him the better to reflect the revolutionary spirit of his time. Suffering was his inspiration, and he gave

utterance to the thousand and one miseries of his day. The poet of restlessness and impulse, his verse found an echo in many a heart whose unhappiness was voiceless. There was a great amount of passionate radicalism in the community, to which his poetry afforded strength and nutriment. He laid bare the cant of English society, and the corruption of the aristocracy, and lashed them with a whip of scorpions. He illustrated and denounced the social tyranny by which thousands are driven into crime, and prevented from returning to virtue. The arrows of his scorn fell fast and thick among the defenders of political abuses. The renegade, the hypocrite, the bigot, were made to feel the full force of his merciless invective. Wielding an uncontrolled dominion over language, and profusely gifted with all the weapons of sarcasm, hatred, and contempt, he battled fiercely in the service of freedom, and knew well how to overwhelm its adversaries with denunciations and stormy threats, with ridicule and irony which should eat into their hearts as rust into iron. He spoke with fiery energy and directness what was burning for expression in the hearts of thousands. The aggressive and destructive character of his political principles had a fierce charm for all whose passions had been wrought into intense or moody strength by the contemplation of injustice and wrong. He gave voice not only to the political discontents of his time, but to the inward misery, the sceptical distrust of goodness and religion, the diseased sensibility, the half-formed opinions and mad impulses, which characterized the excitable spirits of his age. If he brought no balm to heal, he brought fire to stimulate. He was completely master of the whole rhetoric of despair and desperation. His wilfulness and caprice, the inconsist-

ency not only between his writings and his conduct, but between one portion of his writings and another, far from injuring his influence, tended rather to add a new zest and interest to his compositions and actions. A man whose conduct is swayed by impulse instead of principle, whose passions are dogmatic, while his intellect is sceptical, who has no distinct object in life to direct his energies, must necessarily exhibit the most glaring contradictions in his opinions and actions; and to these contradictions Lord Byron's sympathizing readers were as liable as himself.

It is a difficult task to determine how far the faults and errors of Byron are to be attributed to original disposition, to bad culture, or to circumstances over which he had no control. He seems to have been born with violent passions, but not specially gifted with intellectual power. The carelessness with which his education was conducted, and some early wounds of vanity and affection, strengthened this natural predominance of impulse over thought. We can see in his youth the same tendency to individualism, the same reference of all things to a personal standard, which characterized his manhood. Early in life, he was accustomed to brood over the mortifications of his vanity and pride, and to indulge in tempestuous outbreaks of passion when he was crossed in his caprices. He gradually came to consider the world as made for him, and unconsciously to subordinate the interests and happiness of others to his own. This selfishness and self-exaggeration were the bane of his life. He seems never to have taken an enlarged and comprehensive view of society and the world, with reference to his own position in either. When he had committed some act of more than common turpitude,

and reaped its natural results in sorrow and bitterness he experienced a kind of grim satisfaction in throwing the blame upon others. If he had not been deformed in his foot, or if Miss Chaworth had not loved another, or if Lady Byron had not loved herself, the thing would not have happened. This tone of complaint was unmanly and boyish. It was more a revelation of the sufferer's weakness than of the world's injustice. At one time, he seems to have seen through this thin self-deception, and acknowledged that

> "The thorns which I have reaped are of the tree
> I planted; they have torn me and I bleed;
> I should have known what fruit would spring from such a seed."

But, generally, he appears to have been deluded by his passionate selfishness into the belief that his crimes were his misfortunes. This appears exquisitely ridiculous in Mr. Richard Swiveller, and nothing but genius could ever have made it anything else in Byron.

It was not until he felt the reäction of the selfishness and the opinions of others upon his own, that he revealed the energies of his nature. He certainly would never have been a great poet, had he been a contented man. The attempt to crush opposition, to compel others to acknowledge the claims of his selfishness, wrought his powers into intense action. His strength was the strength of madness and desperation. The first volume of his poems gives no evidence of the power afterwards displayed in "Cain" and "Manfred." They were probably admired by his friends, previous to their publication, and his vanity was satisfied. Then came the stinging and contemptuous *critique* in the Edinburgh Review. The rage which this provoked was the inspiration of the

"English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." It is amusing to observe, in this publication, how he not only wreaks vengeance on his reviewer, and on all connected with him, but runs a-muck through the streets, and stabs every author that comes in his way. His wounded pride demands a whole hecatomb of victims, the innocent as well as the guilty. It would seem as if the most superficial consideration must have taught him that many of the feeble poets whom he lashed had only committed his own sin, — that of publishing trifling verses which had been unduly puffed by journals of little authority; and that the severity of his attack upon them was only a confirmation of the justice of the *critique* on himself. But the pith and nerve of his invective indicated that his mind in its "Hours of Idleness" was a very different thing from his mind in its hours of excitement. The success which his vigorous but indiscriminate satire met, was balm to his irritated pride; but it pampered some qualities of his nature which it would have been for his happiness to have stifled. It told him that he possessed power to fight his way through the world, and to overbear any opposition to his conduct, no matter on what principles of right or wrong it was founded.

We think that this egotism or selfishness in Byron was the parent of most of his vices, inasmuch as it emancipated his mind from the burden of those duties which grow out of man's relations with society. Feeling conscious of strong impulses, and taking pleasure in asserting his independence of the world's code of opinion, he early plunged into vicious excesses. It is well known, that the time which elapsed between the publication of the "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,"

and his first visit abroad, was not spent in practising the "Whole Duty of Man." The recklessness with which he indulged in libertinism was only equalled by the coolness with which he referred to it. In a letter to Hodgson in 1810, he makes the candid confession, that he has found "that nothing but virtue will do in this d——d world. I am tolerably sick of vice, which I have tried in all its agreeable varieties, and mean, on my return, to cut all my dissolute acquaintance, and leave off wine and carnal company, and betake myself to politics and decorum." On his return to England, he changed this amiable determination, so far as decorum was concerned, though he paid some little attention to politics. The publication of the first and second cantos of "Childe Harold," the great and immediate fame which attended it, and his introduction to the "world of London," to run a new career of brilliant profligacy, constitute one of the eras of his life. Up to this time, his bad qualities do not appear to have become hardened, and though licentious and careless of restraint, he could hardly be called extremely dissolute. The power of his genius, likewise, had not been fully developed by circumstances. His mind was also very unsettled, and might perhaps have received a much better direction than it took. In his letters and journals during the period which followed, we see him in a variety of aspects, — sorrowful, misanthropic, proud, vain, "everything by turns, and nothing long." He seemed determined to drain the wine of life to the dregs, and to excel in all the pleasant methods of disposing of health, peace, and happiness, which a great metropolis affords. There is a singular blending of flippancy and desperation in his letters and journals at this period. The profanity, ribaldry, and brilliancy, with

which they are garnished, the striking thoughts and fancies with which they teem, and the mode of life and condition of mind which they reveal, can hardly be paralleled in the private records of any other man of genius. His ambition was both high and mean, and seemed bent on those objects which would redound to his shame, as well as those which would crown him with glory. He mingled with the wise, the learned, the witty, the beautiful, the dissolute, with equal ease; and he appeared determined to be excelled by none, either in literature or licentiousness. He aimed at being both a poet and a man of the world,— Plato and Lord Rochester in one. The impressibility of his mind led him to adopt the standard of each company into which he was thrown. He gradually lost all moral fear. Everything sacred in life, religion, affection, sentiment, duty, virtue, he could as easily consider matter for mirth as for serious meditation. His love of epigram overcame his moral sentiments and his poetic feeling. His wit was great, for the very reason that it had no restraint from his conscience, and invaded sanctuaries into which the wit of others hesitated to enter. Since the publication of his letters, we discover that his wife, his most intimate friends, even his own cherished feelings, were not safe from its shafts. His whole correspondence is characterized by a brilliant recklessness, in which profanity and coarseness are prominent elements. His letters are richly studded with those emphatic expletives with which wagoners favor their horses.

But it was not until Byron left England for the second time, and forever, that the condition of mind which his irregularities produced was fully displayed to the world. He went burning with indignation at real or imagined

wrongs, and smarting with the consequences of his errors. From this period, his hatred and contempt of the world deepened in intensity and power, and lent a corresponding strength to his faculties. His residence on the continent filled the measure of his glory and his shame. The splendor, fertility, and daring of his mind, and the hoarded scorn and fiery passion of his heart, were allowed to have full and free expression. His genius "fed on poisons," and they became nutriment to it. There was the same inconsistency in his conduct and writings as before, but his capacity for good and evil had both increased. In almost everything that he wrote, while on the continent, we perceive the mark of great talent. His letters from Italy, alone, — things thrown off in every variety of mood, and some of them bearing strong evidence of the bottle, — display more genius than can be found in all the first two cantos of "Childe Harold." His mind, restrained by no permanent feelings of delicacy, of decorum, of moral or religious duty, and stirred into action by such powerful stimulants as revenge and scorn, developed capacities of which his previous writings had given little evidence. The most sublime and beautiful, as well as the most debasing portions of his writings, belong to this period of his life. "The Corsair" seems tame, when compared with "Cain;" and the misanthropy of "Lara" appears weak beside the misanthropy of "Manfred." The vivid imagination, which glows and glitters in the flood of passionate feeling that overwhelms the reader in the fourth canto of "Childe Harold," had absolutely no existence in the "Hours of Idleness." And nothing that he had written could boast the variety of description, the wit, the satire, the knowledge of the world, the grace and

affluence of fancy, the sovereign command of expression, which surprise and delight us amid the filth and mockery of "Don Juan."

Over all these works, amid the most brilliant shows of wit and imagination, are thrown the sable hues of misanthropy and despair. They are all held in the bondage of one frowning and bitter feeling. They all bear the impress of one versatile, but not comprehensive, mind. They are all fruits of one individual's peculiar experience of life. They all display the gulf of darkness and despair into which great genius is hurried when it is delivered over to bad passions. The lesson they teach is degrading. It casts doubt and insecurity on the noblest objects of life. It is the philosophy of madness and misery, teaching that all happiness is shadowy, all aspiration futile.

> "We wither from our youth, we gasp away —
> Sick — sick; unfound the boon — unslaked the thirst,
> Though to the last, in verge of our decay,
> Some phantom lures, such as we sought at first —
> But all too late, — so are we doubly cursed.
> Love, fame, ambition, avarice — 't is the same,
> Each idle — and all ill — and none the worst,
> For all are meteors with a different name,
> And Death the sable smoke where vanishes the flame."

Such consolatory philosophy as this would not seem to carry with it any charm, derived either from its truth or its attractiveness. Though it speaks for the human race, it is still but the diseased experience of one heart, having no general truth either in the nature of man or the nature of things. It is no more philosophical than it would be for a thief, on his way to the gallows, to conclude that men were born to be hanged, — or for a bad

poet, on his way to oblivion, to conclude that books were written to be damned. Misanthropy is a malady of the mind; all men are not misanthropical, any more than all men are diseased. In itself, this condition of the soul has few attractions, except for those who can sympathize with it, or whose own experience echoes its teachings. But in Byron it is often accompanied by qualities which either soften its harshness, or give it altogether the lie. It is most seductive when blended with things whose reality it denies. The gloom of his meditations is laced with light in all directions. Touches of pathos, tributes of affection, gushes of passionate feeling, gleams of beauty, kindling utterances for freedom and humanity, — these continually appear in company with a cynicism which sneers at the objects to which they appeal, or despair which doubts their existence.

We now propose to hazard a few observations on the nature of Byron's perversions of his genius, followed by an examination of the spirit which animates "Manfred" and "Cain," and concluding with some acknowledgment of the force of his delineations, and the exquisite delicacy of some of his perceptions of beauty and goodness. It is hardly possible to do this without a seeming inconsistency; for a distinction is to be made, not only between his life and his writings, but between one portion of his writings and another. We must admit that, however Satanic some of his compositions may be, and however depraved the tone of much of his meditation, he never lost a keen perception of the pure and the beautiful; and that, in action, he was neither so bad nor so good as he was in thought.

Byron's misanthropy, real or affected, sometimes induced him to give prominence to qualities essentially

unpoetical. The frequent perversion of his powers, and the unhealthy moral atmosphere which surrounds some of his most splendid creations, have given point to a sarcastic epigram, which declares that his ethical system is compounded of misanthropy and licentiousness, the first command of which is, — "Hate your neighbor, and love your neighbor's wife." Coarse appetites, selfish passions, flippant inquiries, a sullen hatred of mankind, — things generally deemed base and degrading in themselves, — he could so represent, by cunning tricks of diction, as to confer upon them a factitious beauty and dignity. "Paint not the sepulchre of thyself, and strive not to beautify thy corruption," was a remark of an old English writer, and Byron might have practised on it to advantage. If we analyze some of the beautiful passages in "Manfred" and "Childe Harold," we shall find that the beauty is rather in appearance than in substance, in the outward show and dress of the sentiment rather than in its spirit, in words more than in ideas. Translated into plain prose, it would seem either horrible or laughable. In this, one of Byron's many characteristics, he reverses a peculiarity of Wordsworth. The latter evolves the latent beauty residing in objects which appear mean and unpoetical to the eye; Byron casts the drapery of the beautiful over things intrinsically mean and bad, and renders them poetical to the eye. Wordsworth would experience the same satisfaction in delineating a peasant or a pedler, which Byron would find in drawing a philosophical debauchee or a sentimental pirate. The former, placing a confiding trust in the essential dignity and elevation of his theme, is contented with simplicity of diction; the latter, feeling the unworthiness of his subject, dazzles and blinds the eye with a blaze of

words. If Wordsworth is inclined to make poverty and peasants too elevated, Byron is disposed to make piracy and robbers too respectable. Both superadd imaginary attributes upon the realities which the names of their characters suggest; but one aims to shed beauty over humble virtue, the other labors to make vice splendid.

If Byron, in his bitter and reckless moods, took pleasure in idealizing the bad, he received no less in degrading the ideal. To his haughty and self-aggrandizing will, it seemed that the force of his genius could alter the relations and distinctions of things, and make both the moral and natural world dependent on the caprices of his sensibility. His readers were to be his vassals, and reflect the changes of his own feelings. He loved power for its own sake, and took delight in its mere exercise. An impulse or whim he would obey, as other men obey a law or a principle. And then he seems, at times, a mere actor, with the world for his audience, striving to produce brilliant effects, and by no means careless of the applause of the pit. "Don Juan," it is probable, best reflects his mind and character in their general aspects. It resembles his private letters and journals more than any of his other works. It is full both of intensity and recklessness. Pictures of beauty are painted with hues "that are words, and speak to ye of heaven," only to be rudely daubed with an impatient dash of the same pencil that wrought their exceeding loveliness; majestic edifices are erected, only to be overthrown; statues, full of life and earnest feeling, are created, only to be dashed petulantly to pieces.

Indeed, Byron experienced great delight in producing those "brisk shocks of surprise" which come from the yoking together of the mean and the exalted, the coarse

and the tender. Some of these do little credit to his heart, and, in fact, cast "ominous conjecture" on the truthfulness of his feelings. Thus, in the description of Haidee leaning over the sleeping Juan, one of the most beautiful pictures in poetry is sacrificed to the scoffing demon of his wit: —

"Like to an angel, o'er the dying
Who die in righteousness, she leaned; and there
All tranquilly the shipwrecked boy was lying,
As o'er him lay the calm and stirless air.
But Zoë the mean time some eggs was frying;
Since, after all, no doubt the youthful pair
Must breakfast, and betimes, — lest they should ask it,
She drew out her provision from the basket."

Again, a most warm and fanciful description of a rainbow closes in imagery drawn from pugilism: —

"A heavenly chameleon,
The airy child of vapor and the sun,
Brought forth in purple, cradled in vermilion,
Baptized in molten gold, and swathed in dun,
Glittering like crescents o'er a Turk's pavilion,
And blending every color into one, —
Just like a black eye in a recent scuffle,
(For sometimes we must box without the muffle)."

A fine poetic consecration of one of the holiest feelings of the human heart, in "Childe Harold," ends with a touch of misanthropy, conceived in the very ingenuity of despair: —

"When the wife,
Blest into mother, in the innocent look,
Or even the piping cry of lips that brook
No pain and small suspense, a joy perceives
Man knows not, — *when from out its cradled nook*
She sees her little bud put forth its leaves,
What may the fruit be yet? — I know not, — Cain was Eve's."

A great deal of this perversion of imagination and levity of feeling, in Byron, we are willing to attribute to waywardness or affectation. But there are passages in his works, which are not merely licentious in tendency, but openly obscene. The higher literature of the present century is, in general, untainted with that impurity of thought and grossness of expression which have too often characterized other brilliant periods of English letters. Lord Byron has the questionable honor of being an exception to this remark. Some portions of his works, for ribaldry and impiety, fairly bear off the palm from all other dabblers in dirt and blasphemy. At one period of his life, towards its close, he seems to have felt no responsibility to the world or to his own fame in the exercise of his talents. Much of this recklessness is, doubtless, to be laid to the intense bitterness of many of his miseries. In these moods, however, though his wit is often keen and his fancy affluent, he rarely raises a hearty laugh. The unhappiness which prompts the malignant jest is seen and felt, amid all the vivacity and glare of the expression. A person unacquainted with the character of Byron would infer, from these bold and bad portions of his poems and letters, that his soul was the seat of obdurate malice. They seem to illustrate what Dr. Johnson calls "the frigid villany of studious lewdness, the calm malignity of labored impiety." They are singularly hard, cold, almost inhuman, in their tone of wickedness. They have none of that soft and graceful voluptuousness with which poets usually gild and humanize sensuality, and of which Byron himself was, when he pleased, so consummate a master. To denounce them in the usual language applied to immoral works, would not do justice to the depth of their turpitude

They enable us to understand what the old scholastic meant, when he called poetry "the devil's wine." They carry us back to the brilliant depravities of Congreve and Wycherly, when virtue was a jest, and piety the mark of a despised Puritan; but they are permeated with a power to which those rakes of the drama could present no claim. To judge of Byron, however, by these alone, or to build up a theory of his character with these as a basis, would be to do him injustice. In themselves, they are worthy only of unalloyed detestation; but they merely illustrate one of the numerous phases of the author's nature. They are the foul offspring of those moments when he hated himself, the world, and heaven; when all the bitterness of irreligion and misanthropy, and all the noisome vapors arising from the dregs of bad passions, were blended in a frightful union with wit and imagination; the reäction from those modes, when, to use his own words,

> "His mind became,
> In its own eddy, boiling and o'erwrought,
> A whirling gulf of fantasy and flame."

We do not wish to dwell on these foul blots on Byron's fame, or to penetrate into those recesses of his heart where they had birth. Misanthropy, when arrayed in wit, satire, and mockery, is a more pitiable object than misanthropy in the darkest hues of despair. It is in "Cain," "Manfred," and the fourth canto of "Childe Harold," — especially in the two former, — that we are to look for the prominent features of Byron's peculiar view of life, and the nature of his influence upon his age. This leads us to the consideration of what Southey stigmatized as the "Satanic school of poetry," or the

poetry of sin. In the works to which we have referred, Byron gives us the heroism of wickedness and misery, — guilt, conscious of itself, and stung with remorse, yet proud of its power of endurance, and daring and defying heaven and hell, in the full view of the consequences of its acts. It is remorse without repentance, — misery that seeks neither hope nor alleviation. All weak emotions are discarded from its dark catalogue of crime and suffering. It deifies self-will, and is impatient of imperfection, not of good, but of evil. The bonds of clay, that check the energies of the mind, it feels as a limitation and a curse. It plucks its illustrations from those aspects of nature where life flourishes in desolation, and is triumphant over all obstacles to its growth and strength.

> "From their nature will the tannen grow
> Loftiest on loftiest and least sheltered rocks,
> *Rooted in barrenness*, where nought below
> Of soil supports them 'gainst the Alpine shocks
> Of eddying storms; yet springs the trunk, and mocks
> The howling tempest, till its height and frame
> Are worthy of the mountains from whose blocks
> Of *bleak, gray granite* into life it came,
> And grew a giant tree; — the mind may grow the same."

The answer of this misanthropy to all entreaties for repentance is, in the moody phrase of Manfred, — "It is too late." It can exist without happiness. Cain asks Lucifer, in reference to the rebel angels, —

> "Are ye happy?
> *Lucifer.* *We are mighty.*
> *Cain.* Are ye happy?
> *Lucifer.* No! Art thou?"

But if happiness be not needed, neither is there a sting to death, though the soul be laden with unrepented sins.

The last words that Manfred utters, as he turns his glazing eyes to the man of God by his side, are the most awful in the drama : —

"Old man! 'tis not so difficult to die."

That is, hell can be borne!

Suffering, in natures thus lifted from the mass, and strong in the heroism of despair, needs no aid from piety and human feeling, but can be endured unshrinkingly by the mind, — "itself an equal to all woes."

"Existence may be borne, and the deep root
Of life and sufferance make its firm abode
In bare and desolated bosoms: mute
The camel labors with the heaviest load,
And the wolf dies in silence."

Prometheus, whose "impenetrable spirit earth and heaven could not convulse," is the ideal of this patient endurance of torture; for Byron was not ever the champion of noisy miseries and talkative despair, but could feel the power of

"Silent suffering, and intense;
The rock, the vulture, and the chain,
All that the proud can feel of pain,
The agony they do not show,
The suffocating sense of woe,
Which speaks but in its loneliness,
And then is jealous, lest the sky
Should have a listener, nor will sigh
Until its voice is echoless."

Hope and joy, to this stern misanthropy, are bubbles that break in every breath of experience. No one can escape the inevitable doom. The only relief is to be sought in a sullen endurance of misery, which takes a

grim delight in the consciousness of the capacity to suffer; or in a strength of will, which would scale the "cherubim-defended battlements" of heaven, and quail not before the "fire-armed angels," in its rhapsodies of meditation. Those who, when once deceived by hope, weave again the old web of delusion, only fall deeper into the pit of wretchedness or meanness: —

> "Some, bowed and bent,
> Wax gray and ghastly, withering ere their time,
> And perish with the reed on which they leant;
> Some seek devotion, toil, war, good, or crime,
> According as their souls were formed to sink or climb."

Life, at the best, is an evil. Pain and suffering track the happiest. Only in the stern defiance or endurance of evil can the soul find any stability.

> "Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen,
> Count o'er thy days from anguish free,
> And know, whatever thou hast been,
> 'Tis something better not to be."

It is almost needless to say that Byron never reached the point of indifference to misery and hatred of the world which he loved to contemplate. This was his ideal of greatness, and he never realized it. It had a charm for his swift passions and his daring fancy; but he was too weak and veering to practise it consistently in life. He was no hero, either in the service of Satan or the service of heaven. But he had a large inward experience of that condition of the heart from which the devilish in conduct flows; and he has represented it with marvellous force and skill. In "Manfred," especially, he has arrayed the Satanic aspect of life in a gloomy majesty, which makes it act powerfully on

the imagination. A kind of shuddering sympathy is awakened forth for the hero. The stormy emotions which convulse his being; the demoniacal pride with which his agonies are borne; the intensity and might of passion, which breathe and burn in almost every word he utters; the picturesque sublimity of the scenes in which the action of the piece passes; the occasional touches of quiet beauty and holy sentiment, which shoot across the ravings of remorse, or twinkle in the sombre imagery of despair; and the continuity of the feeling which overspreads and pervades the whole drama; — all these give to the work a singular fascination, from which it is difficult to escape. Manfred represents a man of superhuman pride and superhuman ambition, — bound by no moral laws, which yet have the power to scourge him, — hating the world and his kind, and seemingly fated to be a curse to himself, and to all who met him either in love or hate. In his confession to the Witch of the Alps, we have a most distinct statement of that disgust for mankind, that yearning after superhuman knowledge, that wild search in the loneliest and most tempestuous aspects of nature for sympathy with inward emotions, with which the writings of Byron teem. He says, —

> "From my youth upward,
> My spirit walked not with the souls of men,
> Nor looked upon the earth with human eyes;
> The thirst of their ambition was not mine;
> The aim of their existence was not mine;
> My joys, my griefs, my passions, and my powers,
> Made me a stranger; though I wore the form,
> I had no sympathy with breathing flesh."

In another connection, he represents himself as having had in his youth noble aspirations to sway the minds

of men, and to be the enlightener of nations; but his thoughts "mistook themselves:" —

"I could not tame my nature down; for he
Must serve who fain would sway, — and soothe — and sue —
And watch all time — and pry into all place —
And be a living lie — who would become
A mighty thing among the mean; and such
The mass are. I disdained to mingle with
A herd, though to be leader — and of wolves.
The lion is alone, and so am I."

The crime which lends such mysterious horror to the remorse and despair of Manfred is one which the pen hesitates to write. It is but obscurely hinted in his wild utterances. But its remembrance is to him continual torment: —

"Look on me in my sleep,
Or watch my watchings. Come and sit by me!
My solitude is solitude no more,
But peopled with the Furies. I have gnashed
My teeth in darkness till returning morn,
Then cursed myself till sunset; — I have prayed
For madness as a blessing — 't is denied me."

In the description of her whom he loved, and whom he destroyed, whose heart withered when it gazed on his, — a passion terrible in its consequences both to him and to her, — some traits of his own character and the Satanic character are thrown in as a contrast to hers: —

"She was like me in lineaments — her eyes,
Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone
Even of her voice, they said were like to mine;
But softened all, and tempered into beauty:
She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings,
The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind
To comprehend the universe; nor these

Alone, but with them gentler powers than mine,
Pity, and smiles, and tears — *which I had not;*
And tenderness — but that I had for her;
Humility — *and that I never had.*
Her faults were mine — her virtues were her own."

We cannot refrain from making one more extract from this drama, in illustration of the inspiration of evil from which it takes its character, and the theory of sorrow and misery, as well as grandeur, which it inculcates.

"There is an order
Of mortals on the earth, who do become
Old in their youth, and die ere middle age,
Without the violence of warlike death.
Some perishing of pleasure — some of study —
Some worn with toil — some of mere weariness —
Some of disease — some of insanity —
And some of withered or of broken hearts;
For this last is a malady which slays
More than are numbered in the lists of Fate, —
Taking all shapes and bearing many names."

There is something noble in the roll of these lines, which dignifies the pride and bitterness of soul from which they proceed.

The tremendous depth and intensity of passion, which Byron was capable of representing with such marvellous skill of expression, is powerfully displayed in his misanthropical creations, and lends to them much of the sorcery they exercise on the feelings. When once we are fairly borne along the foaming and glittering tide of his impulsive genius, it becomes hard to muster any moral scruples as to the direction of the flood. Few poets excel him in the instantaneous sympathy he creates, even among minds having no natural affinity with his own. He is eminently the poet of passion. In almost

all the changes of his mood, the same energy of feeling glows in his verse. The thought or emotion uppermost in his mind at any one time, whether it be bad or good, seems to sway, for the moment, all the faculties of his nature. He has a passionate love for evil, a passionate love for nature, for goodness, for beauty, and, we may add, a passionate love for himself. When he sits in the place of the scoffer, his words betray the same inspiration from impulse, — the same passion, though condensed into bitterness and mockery. If we carefully observe the thoughtful and tender portions of his writings, we shall often find that the tenderness is but

> "Moonlight on a troubled sea,
> Brightening the storm it cannot calm."

Restlessness is the characteristic of his nature. He himself speaks of his verse as bearing him onward as the wind bears the cloud; and his hatred of restraint and "proud precipitance of soul" are well expressed in his exulting gladness at being again on the boisterous element he loved: —

> "Once more upon the waters! — yet, once more!
> And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
> That knows its rider. Welcome to their roar!
> Swift be their guidance, wheresoe'er it lead!
> Though the strained mast should quiver as a reed,
> And the rent canvas fluttering strew the gale,
> Yet must I on; for I am as a weed
> Flung from the rock, on ocean's foam, to sail
> Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail."

The force of passion with which he could express his sense of individual wrong, and his power of carrying the heart with him in his sorrowful consecrations of his

own miseries, are displayed with a wild and smiting energy of utterance in the following stanzas: —

"And if my voice break forth, 't is not that now
I shrink from what is suffered: let him speak
Who hath beheld decline upon my brow,
Or seen my mind's convulsion leave it weak;
But in this page a record will I seek.
Not in the air shall these my words disperse,
Though I be ashes; a far hour shall wreak
The deep prophetic fulness of this verse,
And pile on human heads the mountain of my curse!

"That curse shall be Forgiveness. Have I not —
Hear me, my mother Earth! behold it, Heaven! —
Have I not had to wrestle with my lot?
Have I not suffered things to be forgiven?
Have I not had my brain seared, my heart riven,
Hopes sapped, name blighted, Life's life lied away?
And only not to desperation driven,
Because not altogether of such clay
As rots into the souls of those whom I survey?

"From mighty wrongs to petty perfidy,
Have I not seen what human things could do?
From the loud roar of foaming calumny
To the small whisper of the as paltry few,
And subtler venom of the reptile crew,
The Janus glance of whose significant eye,
Learning to lie with silence, would *seem* true,
And without utterance, save the shrug or sigh,
Deal round to happy fools its speechless obloquy.

"But I have lived, and have not lived in vain:
My mind may lose its force, my blood its fire,
And my frame perish even in conquering pain;
But there is that within me which shall tire
Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire;
Something unearthly, which they deem not of,
Like the remembered tone of a mute lyre,
Shall on their softened spirits sink, and move
In hearts all rocky now the late remorse of love."

This passionateness of Byron's nature is, as we have already observed, manifested in all his writings. But it is sometimes softened into delicacy and tenderness, and becomes remarkably pure and sweet in its flow. The passages of thoughtful beauty which are scattered over his stormy and impulsive poems, — following, as they so often do, fierce bursts of passion, and the bad idolatry of hatred and despair, — are as pleasing to the eye as starlight after lightning. It is hardly necessary to enlarge on the fineness of his feeling for the beautiful, and the fertility of his imagination in images shaping it to the eye, and in tones suggesting it to the ear. A large number of his imaginations have become the language of the emotions they consecrate, and many are fast passing into the common speech of Englishmen. In the third and fourth cantos of "Childe Harold," in "Don Juan," in the narratives and meditations which he has cast in a dramatic form, passages might be selected of most witching loveliness, of deep pathos, of sad and mournful beauty of sentiment, of aspiration after truth and goodness, — of pity, and charity, and faith, and humanity, and love. These display "how hard it is for a noble spirit to divorce itself wholly from what is good." From among many illustrations of this softness and beauty of feeling, we select the following sonnet :—

"Thy cheek is pale with thought, but not from woe ;
And yet so lovely, that, if Mirth could flush
Its rose of whiteness with the brightest blush,
My heart would wish away that ruder glow :
And dazzle not thy deep-blue eyes — but, oh,
While gazing on them, sterner eyes will gush,
And into mine my mother's weakness rush,
Soft as the last drops round heaven's airy bow.
For, through thy long dark lashes low depending,

The soul of melancholy Gentleness
Gleams like a seraph from the sky descending,
Above all pain, yet pitying all distress ;
At once such majesty with sweetness blending,
I worship more, but cannot love thee less."

It is very difficult to connect the scattered characteristics of Byron's genius, so as to give a distinct notion of his personal character. Most certainly he was not a great man in action. He had no calm, self-sustaining energy of nature, few consistent opinions, little breadth of understanding. Irresolution, weakness, a reckless indifference to the consequences of his actions, a kind of settled feeling that he must yield to every impulse of his sensibility, a remarkable absence of anything like a reference of his conduct to moral laws, — these absolutely stare us in the face, as we read his letters and journals. As regards reason, his whole strength lay in his insight; and his momentary glimpses of truth were sometimes peculiarly vivid and clear. In his speculations, or rather declarations, on subjects disconnected with poetry, we often discern many bright hints of truth; but he had not sufficient patience or comprehensiveness to follow them to their results, or to bind them together in logical order. As regards strength of character, his force consisted in passion, not in principle. No vicious man ever lashed vice in others with more power. Not an inconsiderable portion of his writings, both in prose and verse, represents him as the critic of his contemporaries, and the censor and satirist of his age. When we read some of his fierce attacks on George the Fourth

"The fourth of the fools and cowards, called George,"

and his bitter invectives on the scandalous sins of other prominent culprits, we are ready to exclaim, with Sir

Thomas Browne, "While thou so hotly disclaimest against the Devil, be not guilty of diabolism." Again, no man volunteered his opinions with more freedom on literature, theology, politics, and society; but it is difficult to make any discrimination between his opinions and his antipathies, or to discover any law of change which regulated the passage of his antipathies into his loves. His taste was capricious in the extreme. His opinion of any person, or any institution, or any aspiration, varied with the physical variations of his body, and was very different after a debauch from what it was after a ride. No one could infer his judgment of to-morrow from his judgment of to-day. The friend that appeared in the eulogy of one week was likely to point the squib of the next. His consistency in criticism was according to his constancy in hatred. Wordsworth and Southey he always disliked and always abused. As a critic, he has propounded some of the most untenable positions ever uttered by a man of genius. He often mistook his whims and antipathies for laws of taste. When Keats's poems appeared, he entreats Murray to get some one to crush the little mannikin to pieces. After the article in the Quarterly was published, and the death of Keats was supposed to have been accelerated by its brutality, he abuses Murray for killing him, and discovers that there was much merit in the "mannikin's" poetry. It would be easy to multiply examples of this instability and levity of character; but for any reader of his letters and journals, such instances would be needless.

The personal and poetical popularity of Byron is still great. The circulation of his works, even at the present time, exceeds that of Wordsworth, Shelley, Southey, and Coleridge, united. Scott is the only poet, among his

contemporaries, who at all rivals him in the number of his readers. Many of his gloomy creations will long frown defiance upon time. It is certainly a calamity to the world, that a poet possessing such wide influence over the heart should too often have exercised it in cultivating and honoring the heart's base and moody passions; should have robed sin in beauty, and conferred dignity on vice; should have given new allurements to that Dead-sea fruit,

> "Which tempts the eye,
> But turns to ashes on the lip;"

should have shown such brilliant audacity in assaults on the dearest interests of society; and, by the force of his example, and the splendor of his mind, should be able to perpetuate his errors and his vices through many generations to come. It is of importance, not only to morals, but to taste, that there should be no delusion as to the nature of these perversions of his genius; that his wit should not shield his ribaldry from condemnation, nor his imagination be received in extenuation of his blasphemy. In speaking of Byron, as in speaking of men of meaner minds, things should be called by their right names. The method too apt to be pursued towards him is to gloss over his faults with some smooth sentimentalities about his temptations; or to speak of them with a singular relaxation of the rigidity of moral laws. But it seems to us impossible to defend his character, even as we defend the character of many men of genius whose lives labor under some bad imputations. As soon as sophistry has dextrously disposed of one charge, a thousand others crowd up to be answered. He has written his own condemnation. The faults of his life blaze out

in his verse, and glitter on almost every page of his correspondence. And the most that charity itself can do is to repeat the mournful regret of the good abbot over the sins of Manfred: —

> "This should have been a noble creature: he
> Hath all the energy which would have made
> A goodly frame of glorious elements,
> Had they been wisely mingled; as it is,
> It is an awful chaos — light and darkness —
> And mind and dust — and passions and pure thoughts,
> Mixed, and contending, without end or order,
> All dormant or destructive."

ENGLISH POETS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.*

The consideration of the "Poets and Poetry of the Nineteenth Century" involves more than a mere criticism of individual authors. No one can pay much attention to the theme, without being led into inquiries concerning the nature and province of poetry, and the verbal difficulties which perplex the subject of literary ethics. A few observations on some of the sophisms which make poetry synonymous with falsehood, and virtue with propriety, may not be uninteresting to our readers.

The common objection to poetry lies in the word "unreal." In most minds, real life is confounded with actual life. The ideal or the imaginary is deemed to be, at the best, but a beautiful illusion. Reality is affirmed chiefly of those objects directly cognizable by the senses and the understanding. Now, it seems to us, that the mere fact that most minds perceive a higher existence than the life they actually lead, a life more in harmony with moral and natural laws, is an evidence that actual life is a most imperfect embodiment of real life. The difference between duty and conduct, law and

* The Poets and Poetry of England in the Nineteenth Century. By Rufus W. Griswold. Philadelphia: Carey & Hart. 1 vol. 8vo. Second edition. — *American Review, July*, 1845.

its observance, nature and convention, about measures the difference between the real and the actual. No sophism can be more monstrous than that which represents actual life as sufficient for the wants and capacities of human nature. In all the great exigencies of existence, the actual glides away under our very feet, and the soul falls back instinctively upon what is real and permanent. The code of practical atheism, which condemns poetry as fantastical, strikes at the very root of morals and religion; and those prudent worldlings who adopt it must have a very dim insight into the ethical significance of those words which represent the world as "living in a vain show." Now, poetry is the protest of genius against the *unreality* of actual life. It convicts convention of being false to the nature of things; and it does so by perceiving what is real and permanent in man and the universe. It actualizes real life to the imagination, in forms of grandeur and beauty corresponding to the essential truth of things. Literature is the record of man's attempt to make actual to thought a life approaching nearer to reality than the boasted actual life of the world. If the term ideal means something opposed to truth, then it should be abandoned to all the scorn and contempt which falsehood deserves. But the falsehood of life is not in idea so much as in practice; and the sin of the ideal consists, not in being itself a lie, but in giving the lie to commonplace. If the phrase, realizing the ideal, were translated into the phrase, actualizing the real, much ambiguity might be avoided. The inspiration of all the hatred lavished on poetry, by the narrow-minded and selfish, is the feeling that poetry convicts them of folly, falsehood, and meanness.

Poetry, then, is, most emphatically, a "substantial

world." Who shall estimate what vast stores of happiness and improvement the domain of imagination has revealed to us? There we see the might and the majesty, the beauty and the grace, the tenderness and the meekness, of humanity, in their real forms. Let us think, for one moment, of the new world of beings which genius has created, and which poetry makes the denizens of all earnest hearts. Who shall say that he is without companions, to whose soul the marvellous beings of the poet's heart and fancy are constant visitants? In that wide variety of individual characters, whom genius has framed out of the finest and greatest elements of human nature, do we not find companions as genial, friends as true, as those whose faces we see, and whose hands we clasp? Are they not the brethren of our minds and hearts — seen by the soul, if not by the eye? Do they not shed the hues of romance, and inspire the thoughts of power, amid the most toilsome drudgery of existence? Faces may glad the eye of the artisan, in his unremitting labor, as warm, as kindling, and as beautiful, as ever beamed in palaces, or shed lustre on courts. The aristocracy of convention may think him too mean for notice, yet the song of Miriam may mingle with the clink of his hammer, and the sweetest embodiments of beauty and grace which the cunning of genius has shaped may cluster around him in familiar intercourse! Who shall measure the happiness of the boy, when he is first introduced to the realities of Robinson Crusoe, and pores with trembling delight over the dear, dog-eared leaves? In reading works of imagination, worthy of the name, we do not treat them as fictions. The Vicar of Wakefield we love as a real being. Falstaff, with his rosy face and nimble wit, is a companion

who reflects our whole joyousness of mood. We are *with* the fifth Henry in the trenches of Harfleur; with Balfour of Burley in his rock-ribbed prison; with Rob Roy on his native heather. We stand on the parapet with the Jewess, and echo her defiance to the Knight Templar; we eagerly follow every step of Jeannie Deans, in that toilsome and dangerous journey to London, which has given to her name the immortality of the affections. We muse and moralize with Jacques; we play pranks with the delicate Ariel; we break a lance with the stout Sir Tristam; we smite, with the first Richard, the "Paynim foe in Palestine." Touchstone has always a sharp jest in his very look to make our risibles tingle with delight. Faulconbridge has ever at hand a phrase of scorn, which we can pitch at cowardice and hypocrisy; Macbeth has ever a solemn truth to thrill our souls with awe. We have friends for every mood, comforters for every sorrow; a glorious company of immortals, scattering their sweet influences on the worn and beaten paths of our daily life. Shapes "that haunt thought's wildernesses" are around us in toil, and suffering, and joy; mitigating labor, soothing care, giving a keener relish to delight; touching the heroic string in our nature with a noble sentiment; kindling our hearts, lifting our imaginations, and hovering alike over the couch of health and the sick pillow, to bless and cheer, and animate and console!

The world of beings we have been considering, we deem a real world. Poetry is that sublime discontent with the imperfection of actual life, arising from the vision of something better and nobler, of which actual life is still speculatively capable. This discontent is the source of the poetical, whether displayed in action

or thought. It is the inspiration of reform. Poets have thus been finely called the "unacknowledged legislators of the world;" for the passionate or persuasive utterance of great thoughts brings them home to the affections; and, embodied in shapes of beauty, they imperceptibly mould the minds by whom they are perceived. The ideal of yesterday becomes the fact of to-day. True progress consists in a continual actualization of realities. Poetry, in its theoretical aspect, refers to truth, and to truth alone. But poets, living in actual life, must, to some extent, partake of its imperfections. Their perceptions of the real must be affected by the influences of their time, and by individual passions and prejudices. "The gift of genuine insight" is possessed by none in perfection, and to none is the whole domain of reality open. Thus we do not call Shakspeare a universal poet, but the *most* universal of all poets. Poetry, in the form in which it appears in literature, may be practically defined, as a record, left by the greatest natures of any age, of their aspirations after a truth and reality above their age. It represents, to some extent, the "motion toiling in the gloom"—

> "The spirit of the years to come,
> Yearning to mix itself with life."

The real elements in the life of any people, the most interesting and valuable portions of their history, everything in them not shifting and empirical, may be said to constitute their poetry. When Sir Philip Sidney ordered the cup of water, intended to slake his own dying thirst, to be passed to the wounded soldier by his side, he made his most important contribution to the poetry of his nation.

If our notion of what constitutes the real be tenable, then the whole question of literary morality is easily settled. The test of poetry is truth to the nature of things; and if right and wrong inhere in the nature of things, a correct representation of a reality cannot be immoral. With the practical life of a poet we have nothing to do; but one thing is certain, that he must possess an acute intellectual perception, at least, of the essential difference, in the very nature of things, between good and evil, to represent the objects of his thought correctly; and just in proportion as his moral sense is blunted, just in proportion as the low standard of conduct in actual life follows his delineations of real life, in exactly that proportion will his representation be false and unpoetical. The numberless names of characters, which disfigure bad plays and novels, are instances of this fact. It is impossible to represent life and character, without a vivid insight into their relations to right and wrong. The empirical delineations of actual life, very common both in verse and prose, every one feels to be superficial. Time inexorably devours the offspring of convention, because they have no truth grounded in reality. If a poet so represents crime and weakness as to make his readers weak and criminal, criticism as well as morality must call his representation false. In this respect, taste and morals use the same test. The most marvellously endowed mind cannot alter the nature of things. To create is simply to perceive a truth or a possible combination, which has always existed, but has never before been discovered. The poet whose nature is out of harmony with reality can but delineate unreal mockeries; for God's law is above man's genius.

This fact brings us to the consideration of two classes

of poets, which, for the sake of definition, may be termed the intense and the comprehensive; those who combine according to subjective laws, and those who combine according to objective laws. In the first, the individuality of the poet, roused into morbid energy by the pressure of actual life on his sensibility, overmasters his mind, and lends to the objects which he perceives the color of his own passions and prejudices. He often has an insight, singularly keen, into some realities, and a blindness with regard to others. He is a fanatic for the validity of his own perceptions of truth, no matter how much they may be warped by his peculiarities of character; for the intensity with which they affect himself makes him believe them as true with respect to the race as to him. The poet, on the contrary, whose glance is comprehensive; who, in combining and representing objects, regards their laws and relations; whose mind reflects with the same accuracy what is higher and lower than itself; who has no desire to mould nature and man into his own likeness, but has a genial feeling for all orders and degrees of existence; who strives to attain that general truth which includes all individual varieties — he only is worthy the praise of universality. Now, we do not pretend to intimate that we ever observe in poets the perfection of either of these two classes. The egotist speaks often for the race, as well as for himself; and the claim of any poet to universality can be but relative. But we think that, for the purposes of definition, we sufficiently distinguish between the two, by giving what seems to be the theory of each.

The force of outward circumstances often drives a poet into a narrow and intense individualism, even when his mind is sufficiently capacious for comprehension. The

poets and poetry of the nineteenth century are pertinent examples. The time was especially calculated to inflame the passions, and give undue prominence to particular realities. Viewing objects through the medium of personal feeling, and disturbing the natural relations of things in order to accommodate them to the demands of sensibility, the poetry of the period, with the exception of Scott's, has more the appearance of impassioned declamation on man and nature, than correct representation of man and nature. Exaggeration of particular vices or virtues is its general characteristic. The realities which pressed most forcibly on individual minds are uttered with intense earnestness, and continual glimpses are given of lofty truths; but the calm survey of the whole domain of thought and imagination, the fine sagacity which disposes things according to their natural order, are generally wanting. The poetry is often marked by an eloquent intolerance, a beautiful fanaticism, a most sublime wilfulness of vision. It is lightning, not sunlight. The reader is swept along with the poet on a tide of impetuous passion, which admits of no let or hindrance from objective laws. No one can deny that it is great poetry, and while under its fascination, we deem it to be the greatest; for it is full of those thoughts which

> "Seize upon the mind; arrest, and search,
> And shake it; bow the tall soul as by wind;
> Rush over it, as rivers over reeds,
> Which quaver in the current; turn us cold
> And pale, and voiceless; — leaving in the brain
> A rocking and a ringing!"

In these remarks we refer only to the general characteristics of the poetry of the period, with reference to the

intensity of feeling which penetrates it. We have already alluded to the agency of external causes in giving it this character. Many of the poets were subjected to a persecution peculiar to the nineteenth century; that which racks the soul and spares the body. Their self-consciousness was the result, in a great degree, of personal suffering or untoward circumstances. Much of their time was spent in warring with the actual life of their period, and exposing its abuses. As far as they did this, they were met by the bitterest and most malignant opposition. The faults of their poetry, considered critically, were the faults superinduced upon their minds by looking at great wrongs through the medium of a fiery sensibility to justice and truth. The direction of their genius was determined by their position; their intensity of passion was the grating of generous impulses against selfish power. If their philosophy lacked comprehension, it was not deficient in loftiness. They have embodied some of the most refined realities which the mind can perceive, in forms of imperishable grandeur and loveliness; and that portion of truth they were peculiarly calculated to grasp, they expressed with commanding eloquence, and applied with inflexible courage.

When it is considered that our era includes not only their intense feeling and lofty imagination, but also the comprehension of Scott, few will deny that, in all the essential qualities of a great literature, the period is the most glorious in English letters, with the exception of the reign of Elizabeth. The four prominent exponents of this literature we conceive to be Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Scott. In this number we shall not have space to do even superficial justice to the two former.

Shelley and Scott, however, will be sufficient to serve as illustrations of the subject.

The life of Percy Bysshe Shelley presents a notable example of the effects of social persecution on a nature peculiarly fitted to bring us "news from the empyrean." This mode of murder was tried upon Shelley; but his spirit was strong, as well as sensitive, and opposed weapons of ethereal temper to the brutality of his adversaries. His writings, however, give evidence of the injurious influence of the conflict upon the direction of his powers. Possessing one of the most richly gifted minds ever framed by Providence to adorn and bless the world, and a heart whose sympathies comprehended all nature and mankind in the broad sphere of its love, he was still the most unpopular poet of his time — although he indicated, perhaps, more than any other, the tendencies of its imaginative literature, and expressed with more fulness, precision, and beauty, the subtle spirituality of its tone of thought. His character and his writings were elaborately misrepresented. Persons infinitely inferior to him, we will not say in genius, but in honesty, in benevolence, in virtue, in the practice of those duties of love and self-sacrifice which religion enjoins, still contrived to experience for him a mingled feeling of pity and aversion, unexampled even in the annals of the Pharisees. The same sympathizing apologists for the infirmities of genius who shed tears and manufactured palliatives for Burns and Byron, fell back on the rigor and ice of their morality when they mentioned the name of Shelley. His adversaries were often in ludicrous moral contrast to himself. Venal politicians, fattening on public plunder, represented themselves as shocked by his theories of government. Roués were apprehensive

that his refined notions of marriage would encourage libertinism. Smooth, practical atheists preached morality and religion to him from quarterly reviews, and defamed him with an arrogant stupidity, and a sneaking injustice, unparalleled in the effronteries and fooleries of criticism. That pure and pious poet, Thomas Moore, conceived it incumbent on himself to warn his immaculate friend, Lord Byron, from being led astray by Shelley's principles — a most useless monition! Poetasters and rhyme-stringers without number were published, puffed, patronized, paid, and forgotten, during the period when the "Revolt of Islam" and "Prometheus Unbound" were only known by garbled extracts which gleamed amid the dull malice of unscrupulous reviews. Men who could not write a single sentence unstained with malignity, selfishness, or some other deadly sin, gravely rebuked him for infidelity, and volunteered their advice as to the manner by which he might become a bad Christian and a good hypocrite. But Shelley happened to be an honest man as well as a poet, and was better contented with proscription, however severe, than with infamy, however splendid. This was a peculiarity of his disposition which made his conduct so enigmatical to the majority of his enemies.

The mode of judging Shelley adopted by his contemporaries, and followed by many similar spirits in our own day, seems to us radically unjust and foolish. It gives a factitious influence to everything noxious in his poetry, and subverts its own end by the unscrupulous eagerness with which it seizes on bad means. It is therefore not entitled to the praise of judicious falsehood and politic bigotry. The critic who would educe a moral from his writings and conduct, must not begin with substituting

horror for analysis. The most favorable view can be taken of his character, without compromising a single principle of morality and religion. While this is the case, we see no reason why, in the cause of morality and religion, we should echo stale invectives at conscientious error, and join the hoarse roar of calumny and falsehood over his tomb.

In these remarks we do not intend to deny that Shelley had faults. The magnitude of his genius and virtues should not cover these from view. But we believe that for every act of his life which his conscience did not in its most refined perceptions of duty approve, he experienced an intensity of remorse which few are conscientious enough to appreciate. His education, and the unfortunate influences to which he was subjected, account for the defects in his view of life, and the heretical opinions which mastered his understanding. His position was such that he was impelled, by what may be called his Christian virtues, into what must be called his errors. His self-denial, his benevolence, his moral courage, his finest affections, his deepest convictions of duty, were so addressed as to force him into opposition to established opinions relating to government and religion. The sorrowful interest with which we follow the events of his life arises from the feeling that he was, to a remarkable degree, the victim and prey of circumstances. He was made to see and feel the abuses of things before he understood their uses. In the most emphatic sense of the word, he was a poet. This title, we fear, is too often considered to designate merely a maker of verses; to point out a person who can express thought and emotion with the usual variety of pause, swell, and cadence; and who often contrives to write one thing and live another

Not in this sense was Shelley a poet. He was always terribly in earnest. What he felt and thought, he felt and thought with such intensity as to make his life identical with his verse. He was a hero in the epic life of the nineteenth century. Ideas, abstractions, which pass like flakes of snow into other minds, fell upon his heart like sparks of fire. "He was no tongue-hero, no fine virtue prattler." He did not speak from his lungs, but from his soul. And, sooner than betray one honest conviction of his intellect, sooner than award "mouth-honor" to what he hated as cruelty and oppression, he was willing to have his genius derided and his name defamed.

We have said that Shelley was poetical in what he lived as well as in what he wrote. Those realities which his soul did grasp, it held with invincible courage. Hymns to "Intellectual Beauty" came from his actions as well as his pen. He was endowed by nature with an intellect of great depth and exquisite fineness; an imagination marvellously endowed with the power to give shape and hue to the most shadowy abstractions, which his soaring mind clutched on the vanishing points of human intelligence; a fancy quick to discern the most remote analogies, brilliant, excursive, aerial, affluent in graceful and delicate images; and a sensibility acutely alive to the most fleeting shades of joy and pain, — warm, full, and unselfish in its love, deep-toned and mighty in its indignation. This fiery spiritual essence was enclosed in a frame sensitive enough to be its fit embodiment. Both in mind and body Shelley was so constituted as to require, in his culture, the utmost discrimination and the most loving care. He received the exact opposite of these. The balance of his mind was

early overthrown. He had boyish doubts about religion, which he himself could not consider permanent, for his opinions at college vacillated between D'Holbach, Hume, and Plato. These doubts were met, first with contempt, then with anathemas, then with expulsion and disgrace. The consequences may be seen in that wilderness of eloquent contradictions — "Queen Mab." His more mature opinions were visited with proscription, and he was robbed of his children. In every case truth was so presented to him that he could not accept it without moral degradation. A mere lie of the lip, recommended to him by his preceptor, would have saved him from expulsion from Oxford; a mere outward conformity to conventional usage would have given him the first rank as a rich country gentleman, with houses, lands, and a seat in parliament. Society is admirably versed in the art of converting those sent to bless and cheer it into partial evils. Its success in Shelley's case is noteworthy. It saw that, with all his logical power, he was unfitted to reason on the practical concerns of life where abstract right is modified by a thousand conditions of expediency; that when he perceived cruelty and oppression under the forms of liberty and love, and cant trampling reason in the dust, he was too indignant to discriminate, with the cool unconcern of statesmanship, between a theory and its practice; it saw, in short, that he was a true and earnest poet, with a pulse of fire and a mind of light; and, of course, it denounced, and simpered, and lifted its hands, and rolled its eyes, and pointed its finger, and shot out its tongue, and mouthed its commonplace horror, and drove him from its sweet presence and companionship!

From the dispensers of the government and religion

of his own country, Shelley met with little but injustice; in the country of his adoption he saw government and religion controlled by chicane and despotism. All the accidents and circumstances of his condition, from his birth to his death, concurred in placing the most naturally religious of poets in a position of antagonism to the outward forms and creeds of revealed truth.

The writings of Shelley are, to a considerable extent, the history of his mind and heart, as they were affected by personal experiences, and the events of his time. His works are an eloquent protest against the gulf which separates, in life, the actual world from the world perceived by thought and imagination. He desired society to be pure, free, unselfish, devoted to the realization of goodness and beauty; and he believed it capable of that exaltation. For the simplicity of this faith he was doomed to encounter all the perverted truth and goodness that society could command. No man ever lived with a deeper and more inextinguishable thirst to promote human liberty and happiness. This master passion of his nature controlled all his other ambitions, personal or literary. His sense of the hatefulness of oppression, in any form, almost amounted to bodily torture. A wrong done to a nation, the triumph of power over right, filled him with as much grief and indignation as would be excited in common men by the murder of a son or a brother.

The consuming intensity, indeed, with which his soul burned within him at the sight and thought of tyranny, amounted almost to madness. It ran along his veins like tingling fire. His bursts of vehement feeling appear occasionally to rend and tear his frame in their passion-

ate utterance. In the reäction from these periods of agony and anguish of heart, his representations of life were necessarily one-sided. To his mind, in this state, where great evil existed, it drew all things into itself. The following lines exhibit the aspect under which a whole nation appeared to his sight, while his thoughts were filled with its corruptions. They have a moody grandeur of expression which acts powerfully on the sensibility, though they only exhibit the diseased phase of Shelley's philanthropy : —

"ENGLAND IN 1819.

"An old, blind, mad, despised and dying king,
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn — mud from a muddy spring, —
Rulers, that neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But, leech-like, to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow, —
A people, starved and stabbed in the untilled field, —
An army, which liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to those who wield, —
Golden and sanguine laws, which tempt and slay, —
Religion, Christless, Godless — a book sealed ;
A Senate — Time's worst statute unrepealed, —
Are graves, from which a glorious Phantom may
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day."

His poems have been charged with a lack of human sympathy — a singular charge against a poet whose miseries sprung from the intensity of his human sympathies. Indeed, Shelley's sympathies were naturally almost universal. Had his mind received a genial development, had it not been sent back upon itself to prey upon its own energies, we believe that it would have displayed as much comprehension as intensity; for in reading Shelley's poetry we are impressed with what

may be termed the infinite capability of the man. The direction his genius takes in any composition never seemed to in licate the bounds of his powers. What he has done we feel not to be so great as what he might have done. From the maturity of the young man who wrote "Prometheus Unbound" and "The Cenci," what might not have been expected? As it is, innumerable passages might be quoted from his writings, to show the baselessness of the objections to his writings, founded on the assertion of their lack of human sympathy. The predominance of his spiritual over his animal nature; the velocity with which his mind, loosed from the "grasp of gravitation," darted upwards into regions whither slower-pacing imaginations could not follow; the amazing fertility with which he poured out crowds of magnificent images, and the profuse flood of dazzling radiance, blinding the eye with excess of light, which they shed over his compositions; his love of idealizing the world of sense, until it became instinct with thought, and infusing into things dull and lifeless to the sight and touch the qualities of individual existence; the marvellous keenness of insight with which he pierced beneath even the refinements of thought, and evolved new materials of wonder and delight from a seemingly exhausted subject; —all these, to a superficial observer, carry with them the appearance of unreality. A close examination, however, will often prove that the unreality is merely in appearance, — is, in fact, the perception of a higher reality than the world is willing to acknowledge. But, waiving this consideration, no reader of Shelley can be ignorant that his genius sympathized readily with the humble as well as the lofty; that some of the most beautiful exhibitions of the tenderest and simplest affections of the

heart are to be found in his writings; that he had an ear exquisitely tuned to catch the "still, sad music of humanity;" that human hopes, and fears, and loves, all woke sympathetic echoes in his heart; that the language of human passion kindles and burns along his creations, often with a might and freedom almost Shaksperean. Leigh Hunt finely says of him, — "Whether interrogating Nature in the icy solitudes of Chamouny, or thrilling with the lark in the sunshine, or shedding indignant tears with sorrow and poverty, or pulling flowers like a child in the field, or pitching himself back into the depths of time and space, and discoursing with the first forms and gigantic shadows of creation, he was alike in earnest and alike at home."

The great stigma cast upon Shelley's writings is irreligion. As far as this is well founded, it is most certainly to be regretted, and to be condemned. There are many passages in his works evincing much presumption and arrogance, which we could wish blotted out of existence, were it not for the moral they convey to Christians, and the light they throw upon the history of his mind's development. We suppose it would be difficult to adduce any man of genius, who experienced less Christianity from others, and exercised more towards others, than Shelley. It was but natural that a man with so acute a sensibility should confound his own outward experience of religionists with religion. It is a matter of astonishment to us, that those who rail against Shelley for certain rash and wayward infidelities of expressions in his works, do not ask themselves whether excitable minds are not driven daily into similar infidelities by the same causes which influenced him. The man who sees Christianity only in its unnatural connection

with fanaticism and hypocrisy, may be pardoned, at least, for rejecting the latter; and they, at the bottom, were what Shelley rejected.

We have previously said that Shelley was naturally religious. In spite of the refining subtilty of his understanding, he possessed in large measure the quality of faith. With regard to spiritual existences, the world is composed of believers, half-believers, and make-believers. Now, Shelley was ever a believer. In the writings of few poets is there so strong a prominence given to Christian ideas. Not only does he inculcate the love of all that God has made, not only does he make disinterestedness and self-sacrifice the chief of virtues, but he steadily frowns upon the practice of revenge. This last passion, denounced by moralists, forbidden by Christianity, has been almost consecrated by poets, whether Christian or heathen. Since Homer, it has been invested with all the pomp of passion and imagination. Its naked deformity has been disguised under the forms of sentiment, chivalry, honor, glory, piety itself. But Shelley considers it at once as a crime and a blunder. He says, with unanswerable moral logic,

> "To avenge misdeed
> On the misdoer, is Misery to feed
> With her own broken heart."

Love to enemies, he inculcates with an eloquence and beauty which has rarely been surpassed; and in one passage in "Prometheus Unbound," he exalts the sentiment to the height of the moral sublime: —

> "I alit
> On a great ship, lightning-split,
> And speeded hither, on the sigh
> Of one *who gave an enemy*
> *His plank, then plunged aside to die.*"

Amid all the heated feeling and exasperating persecutions of his time, — in considering even the grossest injustice done to himself, Shelley was generally careful to discriminate between the offence and the offender, and to frown upon all cruelties done to bigots and tyrants. In his most radical and revolutionary poems, he clung with the fond reliance of childhood to the omnipotence of love to soften hearts as hard as the nether millstone, to redeem and purify hearts heavy and thick with the accumulated infamies of years. We have not space, in this connection, to do even tolerable justice to Shelley's marvellous genius; but a consideration of the poets of the nineteenth century would indeed be faulty, that overlooked the heroic character of one of the bravest and gentlest spirits, that "e'er wore earth about him."

Shelley, with many points of sympathy with Wordsworth and Byron, had a different individuality. The three, taken together, are the most prominent exponents of the peculiarities of the poetry of the nineteenth century. They have had innumerable disciples; and Mr. Griswold's volume gives evidence, on almost every page, of the influence they exerted upon the character and tendency of the imaginative literature of their time. Their point of view, their phraseology, the flow of their verse, have all been wholly or partly assumed by poets of no mean excellence. We can hardly call the latter imitators, for many of them seem to have reproduced rather than copied their prototypes; and the difference is often not so much in feeling as in faculty, between the disciple and the master.

The power of which these three great poets stood most in need was humor. This would have given them sufficient tolerance of practical life to have represented

.t without exaggeration. As it was, they too often flew into a passion with the world, and narrowed the range of their vision by dwelling too much on particular objects. In their own domain of imagination, they were absolute sovereigns, and evinced wonderful power, and produced grand results; but that domain was limited by the pride and passion of personality. To Scott, alone, of all the poets of his time, belongs the merit of comprehension. Although his works could hardly have been written in any other period than the nineteenth century, they still are remarkably free from its egotism. No writer since Shakspeare has displayed such power in the creation and delineation of character, or such freedom from personal prejudices in describing life and manners. His charity, as has been remarked, extended even to opposite bigotries. The passions, sentiments, thoughts, prejudices of human nature, have free play in his writings. His three great contemporaries, when they attempted to delineate character, barely succeeded in delineating more than themselves, their opposites, or their ideals; but Scott, free from the shackles of this individualism, aimed to represent not one man, but human nature. The life that he delineates is not, as some imagine, actual life. His beings are emphatically beings of the mind, created in accordance with the laws of human nature, and placed in natural situations, and exposed to the usual vicissitudes of life; but still they are not copies, but creations. They have an independent existence in a world of their own, a world acknowledged by the imagination as a reality, and affecting us almost as nearly as the actual world in which we live; but, at the same time, a world in which there is more moral harmony, and a nearer realization of the mind's desires,

than that which comes under our immediate observation. Much of the confusion observed in general judgments on books and authors proceeds from the habit of blending our actual perceptions of life with the life we lead in thought; and the consequence is, that an author who represents in vivid colors the possibility of any form of actual life is often deemed merely its copyist. Scott, for instance, gave us no copy of life as it was in the middle ages; but he took the elements of which it was composed, moulded them into forms corresponding to their nature, and exhibited the whole as something possible to thought, after those elements were given. The actual history of the times is the mere raw material of the intellectual product.

In meditation, — in evolving the spiritual significance of sensible objects, — in that rapid-shaping imagination which robes in forms of dazzling beauty the abstract conceptions of the mind, — in that sublime unrest of the soul, which forces the mightiest elements of the universe to become the servitors of its wide-wandering passions and impatient aspirations, — in that impulsive surrender of the whole nature to the feeling or thought of the moment, and coloring everything with its gloomy or glittering hues, — in all those sensitive qualities of intellect and passion, which all delight to associate with the bard, which, for the moment, take the mind captive, and feel their way in flame along every nerve of our being, — in these, Scott seems relatively deficient from the objectivity of his creations. The individual soul, merging all objects in itself, is not observable in his writings. But in his delineations of character, he well understood, and well represented, the influence of moods of the mind in modifying the shows of external nature,

and the burning emphasis with which imaginative passion utters the images which it seizes and shapes in moments of uncontrollable emotion. His works furnish numberless instances of the sharp, direct, smiting expression of passion, in words that leap right from the heart, and strike their objects instantly. As his power in this respect was displayed only at intervals, from the breadth and variety of character he delineated, the pauses of his passion have sometimes been laid to his weakness, when they are more properly referable to his comprehension. A poem penetrated throughout with intense individual feeling, in other words, one long-continued lyric, and a poem including many individuals and grades of feeling, are to be judged by different laws. Shakspeare could easily have expanded Hamlet into a poem. Had Hamlet lived in the nineteenth century, he might have "multiplied himself among mankind" like Byron, without passing beyond the individuality with which Shakspeare has gifted him. But Shakspeare comprehends him; he does not limit Shakspeare. So Scott, in creating characters, observes the conditions of their being; the wild, passionate utterance befitting one person, in one mood, at one time, would not befit all of his persons, in all moods, at all times.

It must be admitted, however, that Scott, with all his range of vision, with all his skill in painting scenery, with all his love of the beautiful and sublime in nature, evinces no very subtle perception of the spiritual mysteries of the universe. In this his great contemporaries, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Byron, are his superiors. In his description of nature there is no mystical charm, no "sense sublime of something still more deeply interfused." We believe that this mystical element is an

objective as well as subjective reality, requiring only fineness of perception in a peculiar mood of mind to be perceived. But if Scott is here confessedly deficient, neither are his compositions "sicklied o'er" with that "pale cast of thought," that unrest and diseased spirituality, which too often meet us in the sensitive mysticism of subjective poets. Scott is a hale, hearty man, through all his writings. In his domain of imagination, there is neither fog nor earthquake, but only cloud and sunshine. We cannot say that he was deficient in a sense of the supernatural, for that was a prominent ele ment in his genius, as in all genius; but the distinction we all feel to exist between the supernatural and the mystical, measures the difference between him and Wordsworth, in regard to the more refined processes of imagination and feeling.

The tendency of Scott's writings, like the tendency of all the great compositions of the nineteenth century, is in favor of human freedom and human happiness. However strong may have been the spell which the past exercised over his mind, whatever may have been his politics, he could not succeed in accurate delineation of character, without allowing his genius to follow its own instincts, and confer its titles of nobility only on the meritorious. Those who have attacked him for his supposed injustice to particular classes have generally been persons indisposed to do justice to the classes opposed to themselves. Critics who have been bigots in their hatred of him have generally been bigots in their love of some other order and development of genius. But the most pitiful lie that ever insinuated itself into any criticism above that of Grub-street, is the charge of aristocracy brought against his writings. He had not, forsooth,

"any sympathy with the people"! If such a foolish fallacy be correct, then most assuredly he is not the author of the Waverley novels. The people, however, have not left the task of answering the charge to critics. But it is urged that he displays a childish love of rank and titles. This, in its essential meaning, is as false as the other. Who among the characters in "Ivanhoe" is drawn with the most power, — on whom has the author lavished the whole wealth of his heart and imagination? Rebecca, the despised and untitled Jewess. In the "Heart of Midlothian," there is an interview between Queen Caroline and Jeannie Deans. Now, this queen is a case in point. She ruled her husband, who, after a fashion, ruled Great Britain. Yet the little Scotch peasant girl, with no other titles than those conferred upon her by the Most High, is so represented that every reader cannot but consider her as superior to the queen. Instances of a similar character might be quoted without number from Scott's poems and novels, to prove that his sympathy with his race, and especially with the humbler portions of it, has never been excelled by any writer of equal comprehension of heart and imagination. By casting it in a dramatic and narrative form, he made it more universally felt than if he had asserted it with more impassioned emphasis. He so exhibited human nature, that its worth might be perceived by all. Tyranny exists by virtue of misrepresenting man. It considers him a wild animal, who can be kept safely only by being caged. Like the malignant Furies, sent to taunt the godlike Titan, and give a sharper poignancy to the agonies he endured for humanity, it continually teaches that

> "Those who do endure
> Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap
> Thousand-fold torment on themselves and him."

If the theory of tyranny be correct, its most despotic acts are right. We desire to know what human nature is. He, therefore, who represents it in characters that we feel to be true to the nature of things, and which beget in us a deeper sympathy for our kind, cannot fail to promote free principles. There is enough democracy in the Waverley novels to revolutionize the world. The science of freedom may have been imperfectly apprehended by the author, but its spirit and substance was nevertheless felt. The readers of Scott know this, and it is a pity that his critics cannot lift themselves to their point of view.

Two classes of critics have attacked Scott's character and writings, — ultra radicals and ultra transcendentalists. He is not democratic enough for the first, nor spiritual enough for the second. The former, in condemning him, generally advance principles of criticism which lead, when carried out, to the conclusion that Joel Barlow was a greater poet than Homer, because he entertained more liberal notions of government. They seem to think that if a poet's political opinions are monarchical, his representations of human nature must be heretical. For instance, William Hazlitt would be deemed a much more liberal writer than Scott, because his works swarm with invectives and sneers against aristocracy and toryism; yet, in spirit, he was one of the bitterest aristocrats that ever lived, — impatient of opposition, arrogant, self-willed, regardless of the rights and feelings of others, the most uncompromising hater of his time. Now, a man of this stamp, however splendid may be his talents, is not to be trusted in the representation of life and character, because his insight must be so distorted by his antipathies, that whatever was not

comprehended in the narrow circle of his individual tastes, would be denounced or caricatured. Yet, we continually hear the judgments of such men quoted as authorities against men of infinitely more comprehensiveness of nature. Hazlitt detested Scott's politics, and believed all the lies against his character. His criticisms, therefore, are curious specimens of mingled admiration and depreciation. His will is bent resolutely on making Scott appear mean and odious, but his instinctive sense of the excellence of what he is depreciating occasionally breaks out into splendid bursts of eulogy. Sometimes, by shifting his point of view, he would deride a particular quality of an author, after having warmly praised it but a few pages before. In the "Spirit of the Age," when he criticizes Godwin, he speaks with utter contempt of the historical and legendary materials used in the Waverley novels; but in the essay on Scott, in the same volume, he makes these the subject of one of his most magnificent passages of eloquent panegyric. None would claim for Scott greater genius than Hazlitt allows him to possess, when the mist of partisan hatred does not dim his insight. We appeal from "Philip drunk to Philip sober;" — from Hazlitt's individuality to Hazlitt's sense of beauty and Hazlitt's intellectual acuteness.

Carlyle's criticism has been of late years the standing authority against Scott. It is amusing to see the zest with which its dogmas have been echoed by the whole class of *dilettanti* spiritualists. Carlyle's essay is a very natural expression of Carlyle's nature. It has great individual truth; but no criticism is less entitled to be a law to others. It is an attempt to accommodate facts to a prepossession, — to sacrifice one man's genius to another man's prejudice. The tone of it is a "low, melo-

dious" growl. Its cleverness consists in an adroit substitution of the author's warped personal perceptions for the thing perceived. Statements of peculiar individual tastes are given as statements of facts. It is even condemned by Carlyle's own general principles of criticism; but, like Hazlitt, Carlyle's general principles ever bend to the intolerance of his character. Those, however, who are inclined to receive Carlyle's dictum with unhesitating faith, would do well to recollect that, in the case of Scott, it is contradicted by Carlyle's acknowledged critical and spiritual master — Goethe. If Carlyle may be believed, the latter possessed the surest insight of any man since Shakspeare; that in looking at things he always saw objects as they were in themselves. Now, it is curious that Goethe's admiration of Scott was expressed in nearly the same terms that Carlyle delights to lavish on Goethe; and that the pith of Carlyle's objection to Scott, contained in the phrase that he delineated character from the "flesh inwards, not from the heart outwards," is almost literally the objection which Goethe made to another of Carlyle's favorites, Schiller. Eckermann's "Conversations with Goethe" indicate that the great German viewed Scott with almost unqualified admiration. In one connection he is reported to say that "Waverley may be set beside the best works that have ever been written in the world." Again, speaking of the romances generally, he says — "All is great — material, import, characters, execution; and then what infinite diligence in the preparatory studies! what truth of detail in the composition!" Carlyle is struck with the superficial character of Scott's productions. They do little more, he says, than amuse indolent readers. Here the disciple again comes in conflict with the master.

"Generally," says Goethe, "he shows great knowledge of art; for which reason those like us, who always look to see *how* things are done, find especial pleasure and profit in his works." After reading "Ivanhoe," we find the legitimate successor of Shakspeare, the man of sure insight, holding this language:—"*Walter Scott is a great genius; he has not his equal;* and we need not wonder at the extraordinary effect he has produced on the reading world. *He gives me much to think of; and I discover in him a wholly new art, with laws of its own.*" Carlyle cannot discover this. Goethe, again, says:—"His comprehensive existence corresponds with his great genius. You remember the English critic, who compares the poet with voices for singing, of which some can command only a few fine tones, while others can, at pleasure, run through the whole compass, equally at their ease with the highest and the lowest note. Walter Scott is one of this last sort."

In fact, Goethe judges Scott as it is fashionable among us to judge German authors. It is a pity that much of the acuteness employed in detecting the esoteric meaning of foreign compositions is not diverted into English channels. If any of our readers will turn to the conversation in Eckermann on the "Fair Maid of Perth," one of Scott's minor creations, they will see with what fineness of analysis its latent beauties and hidden laws are evolved. The mere novel-reader deems it a mere novel, but to Goethe it seems a wonderful work of genius. In referring to one slight circumstance in the development of a character, — so slight that we believe nobody else ever observed it, — Goethe tells us that "it shows an eye for human nature to which the deepest mysteries lie open." Carlyle would use exactly this lan-

guage respecting Goethe. Now, in these extracts, we see one of the greatest and most comprehensive minds in modern times, one, too, particularly gifted with a clear perception of objective realities, discovering in Scott such preëminent intellectual excellences. If any of our pseudo-transcendental brethren are desirous of taking their opinions at second-hand, why not select the best that can be obtained? They are sure, at least, of having Sir Harcourt's consolation: — "My wife eloped, it is true; but then she did not insult me by running away with a cursed ill-looking scoundrel."

We have referred to Scott thus at length because it has become almost fashionable to underrate his genius. It must pass away, like other fashions, The man is too great to have his "quietus made" with a "bare bodkin." As an imaginative writer, we have alluded, of course, to his novels, as well as poems. In both the distinctive character of his genius is observable; but, in a consideration of his mental power, his whole works and life are to be brought into discussion, and these display an almost unparalleled activity and force of being. His possession of rare capacities is not so remarkable as his strength of nature in their exercise. He was so strong that he overcame obstacles, and mastered difficulties, without any of those spasmodic signs which usually accompany great effort.

The heroism of his character does not lie on the surface, and has been too much overlooked, for that reason; but he still was a hero, if intense struggle with inward and outward evils constitutes heroism. Because calamity did not urge him, as it did contemporary poets, into public confession of feeling, many have deemed him deficient in feeling. After years of almost gigantic labor,

and at an age when most men think of retiring from all active exercise of their powers, he resolutely bent his energies to free himself from enormous pecuniary liabilities. For what sentimental idealists would call the mere vulgar virtue of paying his debts, he consciously sacrificed his life. He literally paid his creditors in instalments of his vitality; and worked incessantly until brain and heart were crushed beneath the load of labor. Had the "pound of flesh nearest his heart" been cut off at once, it would have been mercy compared to that lingering toil, that slow exhaustion of faculty, that gradual letting forth of the blood, drop by drop, which was the mode ordained for his destruction. Now, if instead of killing himself to pay his debts, he had written a very affecting "Farewell to my Books," or some elegant rhymes accusing fortune of cruelty, or a truculent rhapsody about his own miseries, — had he done as poets usually do when great practical evils pitilessly invade the sanctuaries of their ideal existence, — we have no doubt that his personal admirers would be multiplied among "men of deep feeling," and "genial critics," and mild-mannered sympathizers with "the infirmities of genius." The same disposition which makes society so fearful that the private mourner will not experience sufficient grief, and so nicely critical of his conduct and features after calamity, leads it to expect that men of genius will be communicative in misery, and allow no "secret wounds to bleed beneath their cloaks."

The position of Samuel Taylor Coleridge among his contemporaries has never been settled by common consent. Mr. Griswold boldly places him at the head, calling "him the most wonderful genius of the nineteenth century." When we consider the beauty and

delicacy of his genius, and the all but universal acquirements of his mind, it is difficult to resist joining in the acclamation of his disciples. A great part of his fame is doubtless owing to the passionate eulogies of friends who enjoyed his companionship, and listened to the eloquence of his conversation. Wordsworth speaks of him as the "rapt one, with the godlike forehead," the "heaven-eyed creature." Hazlitt says that no idea ever entered the mind of man, but at some period or other "it had passed over his head with rustling pinions." Talfourd writes of seeing "the palm-trees wave, and the pyramids tower, in the long perspective of his style." All who knew him seemed to have confidence in his capacity of doing an indefinite something, which no other man could do. The records of his conversation, in a book called "Coleridge's Table Talk," are mere rubbish compared with what we might have expected from the eulogists of his discourse. In fact, Coleridge's reputation was greater for the works he was to write, than for those he had written. With regard to his intended productions, society "never was, but always to be, blest." His mighty work on philosophy, which his disciples were continually preparing the world to receive, never came. In the "Friend" and the "Aids to Reflection," there is displayed a lack of constructive power, which casts "ominous conjecture" on his capacity to frame a system of metaphysics at once comprehensive and comprehensible. They can hardly be called philosophical, replete though they be with splendid fragments of truth and examples of intellectual acuteness and force. They excite wonder, because the processes of the understanding and the imagination are continually crossing each other, and producing magnificent disorder. Visions

intermingle with deductions, and inference follows image. He thinks emotions, and feels thoughts. We hear the "rustling pinions" of the great principle that is to comprehend all, but it passes over the head, not into it. The mind of the man does not seem to comprehend and bind together the ideas it singly perceives or appropriates. His prose works contain great things, without being great works. They give an impression, which we believe was felt among many of his contemporaries, that he was half seer, and half charlatan.

From his poetry, his philosophical criticism, and the traditions of his conversation, Coleridge will probably be most esteemed by posterity. As a poet we think that his genius is displayed with the most wonderful effect in "Christabel" and "The Ancient Mariner." In these the mystical element of human nature has its finest poetical embodiment. They act upon the mind with a weird-like influence, searching out the most obscure recesses of the soul, and waking mysterious emotions in the very centre of our being; and then sending them to glide and tingle along every nerve and vein with the effect of enchantment. It is as if we were possessed with a subtile insanity, or had stolen a glance into the occult secrets of the universe. All our customary impressions of things are shaken, by the intrusion of an indefinite sense of fear and amazement into the soul. To address so refined an element of thought as this, is one of the most daring efforts of genius; for the chances are always in favor of failure, and failure inevitably draws down ridicule. Everybody detests the idea of mysticism, and denies its legitimacy; and keen must be the imagination which succeeds in piercing through the common experience of consciousness, to its remote seat

in our nature. When it is awakened, no effort of the will can stifle its subtle workings. Touched by a master mind, it becomes a source of mysterious delight; and Coleridge knew well the mental avenues and labyrinths through which language must pass to reach its dwelling-place. He could likewise stir that supernatural fear in the heart, which he has so powerfully expressed in one stanza of the "Ancient Mariner"— a fear from which no person, poet or prosaist, has ever been entirely free; — and which makes the blood of the pleasantest atheist at times turn cold, and his philosophy slide away under his feet:—

> "Like one, that on a lonesome road
> Doth walk in fear and dread,
> And having once turned round, walks on,
> And turns no more his head,
> Because he knows a frightful fiend
> Doth close behind him tread."

The harmony and variety of Coleridge's versification, his exquisite delineations of the heart, his command of imagery, his "wide-wandering magnificence of imagination," have so often been the theme of admiring comment, that they need not be dwelt upon here. There is no person, with the least pretension to poetical taste, who cannot find something in Coleridge, either in the gorgeous suggestiveness of his poetry, or in its delicate and graceful feeling, to admire or love. There are, at the same time, a number of obvious faults, scattered over his poems, which evince that he sometimes reposed on his laurels, and wrote when he ought to have slept. Some of his love pieces are merely pretty, and others tame and mawkish. No poet, with so much feeling and faculty for the sublime, and with such a sway over the most majestic harmonies of sound, ever allowed himself

to fall into such bombast as occasionally disfigures his style. Affluent as he was, he seems to have sometimes selected those hours for composition when his mind chanced to be barren and nerveless; and the results of those sterile intervals every lover of his genius would desire to see blotted from his works. It appears impossible that the mind that created "Genevieve" should likewise have produced amatory verses which would do no honor to Mrs. Cowley or Robert Merry. Coleridge, indeed, surprises us almost as much by his failures as his triumphs.

Robert Southey fills a large space in the literary annals of our time. His name and his powers were connected with those of Wordsworth and Coleridge, in the poetical revolution which marked the commencement of the century. Though the largest portion of his time was spent in retirement, he was engaged in continual contests. Byron detested and reviled him, with the utmost warmth of his nature; and the Edinburgh Review, for a series of thirty years, made him the object of its sarcasm and ridicule. Many of these attacks were almost justified by Southey's own intolerance of nature. He was a dogmatist of the most provoking kind, — cool, calm, bitter, and uncompromising; and he delighted to dogmatize on subjects which his mind was unfitted to treat. Nothing could shake his egotism. Though, in many respects, one of the best of Christians and noblest of men, he was never free from bigotry when there was any occasion for its development. He often confounded his prejudices with his duties, and decked out his hatreds in the colors of his piety. In all his controversies he never seems to have appreciated the rights of an adversary. To oppose him was to champion infidelity

or anarchy. Yet no man had more kindness of heart or displayed greater willingness to befriend either struggling genius or mediocrity, when his controversial passions were stilled. If we look at him from one point of view, he seems the most unamiable of men; while from another, he appears the most benevolent and gentle. He was a kind of St. Dominic on one side of his nature, and a kind of Fénelon on the other. His adversaries, therefore, he made his enemies, and his friends became his partisans.

As a prose writer Southey was more successful than as a poet. His prose style is of such inimitable grace, clearness and fluency, that it would make nonsense agreeable. His poetry indicates a lack of shaping imagination, and is diffusely elegant in expression. He often gives twenty lines to a comparison which Shelley or Wordsworth would have compressed into an epithet. In narrative skill, and constructive power, he excels both; and is himself excelled only by Scott. His mind was exceedingly fertile in the invention of incident. "Thalaba" and the "Curse of Kehama" are the most dazzling of his long poems, and show to the best advantage the whole resources of his mind. In these the originality consists in connecting common passions and common virtues with the most fantastical and uncommon incidents, and in exhibiting the powers and feelings of human nature in relation to the grotesque fictions of superstitious faith. The predominant faculty in exercise is fancy; and, were it not that the author's perceptions of character and conduct are rigidly severe, the whole representation would appear like a feverish dream; but the continual presence of the faults and the virtues of Robert Southey, amid the most monstrous and im-

probable machinery of his story, gives to the essential substance of the poems a character of didactic reality. Inhuman or superhuman actions are performed from human motives, and relate to human ideas of duty and feeling.

In the delineation of the passions, Southey manifests generally more of the theologian than of the poet. Love is almost always represented either as lust or adoration. Macaulay pointedly remarks, that "his heroes make love either like seraphim or like cattle." There is no golden mean between the extremes of passion, in his delineations. He never could have written "Genevieve," or represented Effie Deans. There is something harsh and hard in his morality, which prevents his forming a tolerant estimate of character. His men and women are didactic rather than dramatic, — embodiments of essays on human nature, rather than embodiments of human nature itself. They evince a great lack of insight, and have little objective truth. His characters are mirrors to reflect the outlines of his own individuality. As a poet, he seems to us to fall below Scott, Shelley, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, and to belong to the second class of contemporary poets. In imagination and true poetic feeling, we should hesitate to place him on an equality with Campbell, Barry Cornwall, Tennyson, and Keats, although in general capacity and acquirements, and especially in force of individual character, he is their superior. It requires no prophetic gift to predict that most of his verse is destined to die.

Thomas Moore began his career with singing, not the "Loves of the Angels," but the loves of the roués. His early poems are probably the most disgraceful legacies of licentious thought ever bequeathed by prurient youth to

a half-penitent age. They are exceedingly clever, unprincipled, and pernicious. We never read any verses, produced by one at the same tender years, so utterly deficient in moral sense. Their gilded vulgarity is not even redeemed by any depth of passion. They are the mere children of fancy and sensation, having no law higher than appetite. They constitute the libertine's text-book of pleasant sins, full of nice morsels of wickedness, and choice tit-bits of dissoluteness. What there is poetical in them is like the reflection of a star in a mud-puddle, or the shining of rotten wood in the dark.

The taint of this youthful voluptuousness infects much of Moore's more matured composition. His mind never wholly became emancipated from the dominion of his senses. His notion of Paradise comes from the Koran, not the New Testament. His works are pictorial representations of Epicureanism. Pathos, passion, sentiment, fancy, wit, are poured melodiously forth in seemingly inexhaustible abundance, and glitter along his page as though written down with sunbeams; but they are still more or less referable to sensation, and the "trail of the serpent is over them all." He is the most superficial and empirical of all the prominent poets of his day; and, with all his acknowledged fertility of mind, with all his artistical skill and brilliancy, with all his popularity, he never makes a profound impression on the soul, and few ever think of calling him a great poet, even in the sense in which Byron is great. He is the most magnificent trifler that ever versified. Nothing can be finer than his sarcasm, nothing more brilliant than his fancy, nothing more softly voluptuous than his sentiment. But he possesses no depth of imagination, no grandeur of thought, no clear vision of purity and holiness. He has neither

softiness nor comprehension. Those who claim for him a place among the immortals are most generally young people, who are conquered by the "dazzling fence" of his rhetoric, and the lightning-like rapidity with which he scatters fancies one upon another. He blinds the eye with diamond dust, and lulls the ear with the singing sweetness of his versification. Much of his sentiment, which fair throats warble so melodiously, is merely idealized lust. The pitch of his thought and feeling is not high. The impression gained from his works is most assuredly that of a man variously gifted by nature, adroit, ingenious, keen, versatile, "forgetive," — a most remarkable man, but not a great poet. Nothing about his works "wears the aspect of eternity."

As a lyrical poet, he has written many exquisite songs, and no bad ones. His power of expression is always equal to the thought or emotion to be expressed. As far as he has conception, he has language. His lyrics are numerous and various, and relatively excellent. But even here, his strongest ground, he is not great. According to the character and capacities of a poet, will be the merit of his lyrics. Moore, in all his celebrations of patriotism and love, has never reached the elevation of his great contemporaries. To be a great lyrist, a poet must have great elements of character. These Moore does not possess. He has written nothing equal to the best songs and odes of Campbell, though the latter has no claim to his versatility and fluency of feeling and fancy.

The fame of Thomas Campbell will ultimately rest on his lyrics. They are grand and stirring compositions, full of the living energy of high emotion, and dotted, here and there, with fine flashes of imagination. They come,

too, from deep sources of feeling and inspiration. Campbell possessed a noble nature, but its impulses were checked by an incurable laziness. He "dawdled" too much over his long compositions. The capacity of the man is best displayed in those burning lyrics which were called forth by the events of his time. When his soul was roused to its utmost, it ever manifested great qualities. His poems, generally, will probably live. His descriptions of the gentler passions have exquisite tenderness and pathos, when not injured by over refinement in the expression. His condensation is often remarkable for its artistical excellence and its effectiveness. The bombast, strained metaphors, and turgid epithets, which occasionally disfigure his compositions, were the result of indolence, more than bad taste. We can select lines and stanzas from his poems, having all the appearance of inspiration, which must have been produced in a state of mental apathy. His works, generally, are good examples of the distinction between poetry and eloquence, in not admitting the diffuse magnificence of the latter. Almost all his contemporaries who were deeply stirred by individual calamities, or who entered into colloquies with the public, would often merge the poet in the orator. Byron was more lavish of his passion than his imagination. Had Campbell written "Childe Harold," it would have cost him ten years more labor than it did the author, and would not have been half as long.

Mr. Griswold informs us, with admirable gravity, that the writings of Alfred Tennyson have sufficient merit "to secure him a permanent place in the third or fourth rank of contemporary English poets." This is rather an amusing slip of his cautious pen. Tennyson's genius is

of too marked a nature to be disposed of with so much *nonchalance*. Of all the successors of Shelley, he possesses the most sureness of insight. He has a subtle mind, of keen, passionless vision. His poetry is characterized by intellectual intensity as distinguished from the intensity of feeling. He watches his consciousness with a cautious and minute attention, to fix, and condense, and shape into form, the vague and mystical shadows of thought and feeling which glide and flit across it. He listens to catch the lowest whisperings of the soul. His imagination broods over the spiritual and mystical elements of his being with the most concentrated power. His eye rests firmly on an object until it changes from film into form. Some of his poems are forced into artistical shape by the most patient and painful intellectual processes. His utmost strength is employed on those mysterious facts of consciousness which form the staple of the dreams and reveries of others. His mind winds through the mystical labyrinths of thought and feeling, with every power awake, in action, and wrought up to the highest pitch of intensity. The most acute analysis is followed, step by step, by a suggestive imagination, which converts refined abstractions into pictures, or makes them audible to the soul through the most cunning combinations of sound. Everything that is done is the result of labor. There is hardly a stanza in his writings but was introduced to serve some particular purpose, and could not be omitted without injury to the general effect. Everything has meaning. Every idea was won in a fair conflict with darkness, or dissonance, or gloom. The simplicity, the barrenness of ornament, in some of his lines, are as much the result of contrivance as his most splendid images. With what labor,

for instance, with what attentive watching of consciousness, must the following stanza have been wrought into shape: —

> "All those sharp fancies, by down-lapsing thought
> Streamed onward, lost their edges, and did creep,
> Rolled on each other, rounded, smoothed and brought
> Into the gulfs of sleep."

This intense intellectual action is displayed in his delineations of nature and individual character, as well as in his subjective gropings into the refinements of his consciousness. In describing scenery, his microscopic eye and marvellously delicate ear are exercised to the utmost in detecting the minutest relations and most evanescent melodies of the objects before him, in order that his representation shall include everything which is important to their full perception. His pictures of English rural scenery, among the finest in the language, give the inner spirit as well as the outward form of the objects, and represent them, also, in their relation to the mind which is gazing on them. But nothing is spontaneous; the whole is wrought out elaborately by patient skill. The picture in his mind is spread out before his detecting and dissecting intellect, to be transferred to words only when it can be done with the most refined exactness, both as regards color, and form, and melody. He takes into calculation the nature of his subject, and decides whether it shall be definitely expressed in images, or indefinitely through tone, or whether both modes shall be combined. His object is expression, in its true sense; to reproduce in other minds the imagination or feeling which lies in his own; and he adopts the method which seems best calculated to effect it. He never will trust

nimself to the impulses of passion, even in describing passion. All emotion, whether turbulent or evanescent, is passed through his intellect, and curiously scanned. To write furiously would to him appear as ridiculous, and as certainly productive of confusion, as to paint furiously, or carve furiously. We only appreciate his art when we consider that many of his finest conceptions and most sculptural images originally appeared in his consciousness as formless and mysterious emotions, having seemingly no symbols in nature or thought.

If our position is correct, then most certainly nothing can be more incorrect than to call any poem of Tennyson's unmeaning. Such a charge simply implies a lack in the critic's mind, not in the poet's. The latter always *means* something in everything he writes; and the form in which it is embodied is chosen with the most careful deliberation. It seems to us that the purely intellectual element in Tennyson's poetry has been overlooked, owing perhaps to the fragility of some of his figures, and the dreaminess of outline apparent in others. Many think him to be a mere rhapsodist, fertile in nothing but a kind of melodious empiricism. No opinion is more contradicted by the fact. There are few authors who will bear the probe of analysis better.

The poetry of Tennyson is, moreover, replete with magnificent pictures, flushed with the finest hues of language, and speaking to the eye and the mind with the vividness of reality. We not only see the object, but feel the associations connected with it. His language is penetrated with imagination; and the felicity of his epithets, especially, leaves nothing to desire. "Godiva" combines simplicity of feeling with a subtle intensity of imagination, which remind us half of Chaucer and half

of Shelley. Like the generality of Tennyson's poems, though short, it contains elements of interest capable of being expanded into a much larger space. But the poem which probably displays to the best advantage his variety of power is "The Gardener's Daughter." It is flushed throughout with the most ethereal imagination, though the incidents and emotions come home to the common heart, and there is little appearance of elaboration in the style. It is bathed in beauty — perfect as a whole, and finished in the nicest details with consummate art. There is a seeming copiousness of expression with a real condensation; and the most minute threads of thought and feeling, — so refined as to be overlooked in a careless perusal, yet all having relation to the general effect, — are woven into the texture of the style with the most admirable felicity. "Locksley Hall," "Ænone," "The May Queen," "Ulysses," "The Lotos-eaters," "The Lady of Shalott," "Mariana," "Dora," "The Two Voices," "The Dream of Fair Women," "The Palace of Art," all different, all representing a peculiar phase of nature or character, are still all characterized by the cunning workmanship of a master of expression, giving the most complete form to the objects which his keen vision perceives. The melody of verse, which distinguishes all, ranging from the deepest organ tones to that

> "Music which gentlier on the spirit lies
> Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes,"

is also of remarkable beauty, and wins and winds its way to the very fountains of thought and feeling.

We extract a few of Tennyson's pictures, in illustration of his imaginative and artistical power. It will be seen that they are illustrations of moods of mind as well

as images of scenery; that they all bring with them a host of suggestive associations.

"For some were hung with arras green and blue,
Showing a gaudy summer-morn,
Where with puffed cheek the belted hunter blew
His wreathed bugle-horn.

"One seemed all dark and red — a tract of sand;
And some one pacing there alone,
Who paced forever in a glimmering land,
Lit with a low large moon.

"One showed an iron coast and angry waves,
You seemed to hear them climb and fall
And roar, rock-thwarted, under bellowing caves,
Beneath the windy wall.

"And one, a full-fed river winding slow
By herds upon an endless plain,
The ragged rims of thunder brooding low,
With shadow streaks of rain."

* * * * *

"A still salt pool, locked in with bars of sand,
Left on the shore — *that hears all night*
The plunging seas draw backward from the land
Their moon-led waters white."

* * * * *

"As in strange lands a traveller walking slow,
In doubt and great perplexity,
A little before moon-rise hears the low
Moan of an unknown sea."

* * * * *

"For there was Milton, like a seraph strong,
Beside him Shakspeare bland and mild;
And there the world-worn Dante grasped his song,
And somewhat grimly smiled."

* * * * *

"So shape chased shape as swift as, when to land
Bluster the winds and tides the self-same way,
Crisp foam-flakes scud along the level sand
Torn from the fringe of spray."

* * * * *

"Her slow, full words sank through the silence drear
As thunder-drops fall on a sleeping sea."

* * * * *

"A saying hard to shape in act,
For all the past of time reveals
A bridal dawn of thunder-peals,
Wherever Thought has wedded Fact."

* * * * *

"Idalian Aphrodite beautiful,
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,
With rosy slender fingers backward drew
From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
And shoulder; from the violets her light foot
Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form,
Between the shadow of the vine branches,
Floated the glowing sunlight as she moved."

* * * * *

"The swimming vapor slopes athwart the glen,
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
And loiters, slowly drawn."

* * * * *

"Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
Stands up and takes the morning."

* * * * *

"And Freedom reared in that august sunrise
Her beautiful bold brow,
When rites and forms before his burning eyes
Melted like snow."

* * * * *

"The viewless arrows of his thoughts were headed
And winged with flame."

* * * * *

"But ever at a breath
She lingered, looking like a summer moon
Half dipt in cloud; anon she shook her head
And showered the rippled ringlets to her knee;
Unclad herself in haste; adown the stairs
Stole on; *and, like a creeping sunbeam, slid*
From pillar unto pillar, until she reached
The gateway; there she found her palfrey trapt
In purple blazoned with armorial gold."

We close our extracts from Tennyson with the poem of "Ulysses." For its length, it is certainly one of the most grandly solemn pieces of wisdom in English literature. The unbroken majesty of its tone, the calm depth of its thought, the picturesque images which serenely blend with the fixed feeling of the piece, the spirit of hoar antiquity which pervades it, and the clearness with which the whole picture is brought home to the imagination, leave upon the soul a most profound impression of the author's genius.

"ULYSSES.

"It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Matched with an aged wife, I meet and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoyed
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart,
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, counsels, governments,
Myself not least, but honored of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch where through
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
As though to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were

For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle —
Well loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and through soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.
There lies the port: the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toiled, and wrought, and thought with me —
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads — you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'T is not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and, sitting well in order, smite
The sounding furrows: for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

The poetry of Bryan Waller Proctor (Barry Cornwall) has splendid traits of genius. Passages might be clipped from his writings which no poet would disown. The difficulty with him is, that he writes often in a "fury and pride of soul," without having definite ideas and images. Feeling, — strong, vehement, rushing feeling, — which clutches at illustrations speaking to the ear and sensibility rather than the imagination, is the inspiration of much of his poetry. Occasionally his verse splits on the rocks of obscurity and rant. But there is a breadth of passion in some of his poems, which, whether it is expressed in vast and vague metaphors, or simmers and gleams in radiant fancies, or is poured out on his page in one hot gush, or leaps deliriously down the "dark, deep, thundering river" of his style, has ever a kindling effect on sensibility. There never was a poet more honest in the expression of his nature. His songs are the reflections of all moods of his mind, and he cares not if the sentiment of one contradicts that of another. In grief, or love, or fear, or despair, at the festive board or the bed of sickness, wherever and whenever the spirit of song comes to him, it takes the color of the emotion which animates or saddens the moment. He is a large-hearted and most lovable man; and his poetry is admired because it is the expression of his character.

Proctor is not deficient in fineness as well as fulness of passion. There is a depth of meaning in some of his pieces which is felt in the remotest sanctuaries of our being. Though a little affectation and daintiness may occasionally creep into his delineations of the softer passions, he has given us many exquisite pictures of pensive beauty. The tenderness of a kindly and generous heart, and the thoughtfulness of a brooding spirit, are often dis-

played in his writings. His imagination acts with as much effect, perhaps, in shedding over his representations of feeling a warm, rich, golden flush, as in shaping beautiful and graceful images. Without taking into consideration the passionate beauty of many of his dramatic scenes, his songs would be sufficient to stamp his reputation. For the union of voluptuous repose with the most perfect purity, what can excel the following: —

"A CHAMBER SCENE.

"Tread softly through these amorous rooms:
For every bough is hung with life,
And kisses, in harmonious strife,
Unloose their snarp and winged perfumes!
From Afric, and the Persian looms,
The carpet's silken leaves have sprung,
And heaven, in its blue bounty, flung
These starry flowers, and azure blooms.

"Tread softly! By a creature fair
The deity of love reposes,
His red lips open, like the roses
Which round his hyacinthine hair
Hang in crimson coronals;
And passion fills the archéd halls;
And beauty floats upon the air.

"Tread softly — softly, like the foot
Of Winter, shod with fleecy snow,
Who cometh white, and cold, and mute,
Lest he should wake the Spring below.
O, look! for here lie Love and Youth,
Fair spirits of the heart and mind;
Alas! that one should stray from truth,
And one — be ever, ever blind!"

Had we space we should like to extract "A Petition to Time," "The Lake has Burst," the address "To the Singer Pasta," and, indeed a number of Mr. Griswold's

other selections from Proctor. We pass over them, however, to insert "The Storm," a grand example of imagination pervaded by the most powerful feeling, and throwing off images of the intensest beauty and grandeur.

"A STORM.

"The spirits of the mighty sea
To-night are wakened from their dreams,
And upward to the tempest flee,
Baring their foreheads, where the gleams
Of lightning run, and thunders cry,
Rushing and raining through the sky.

"The spirits of the sea are waging
Loud war upon the peaceful night,
And bands of the black winds are raging
Through the tempest blue and bright;
Blowing her cloudy hair to dust
With kisses, like a madman's lust!

"What ghost now, like an Até, walketh
Earth — ocean — air? and aye with Time,
Mingled, as with a lover talketh?
Methinks their colloquy sublime
Draws anger from the sky, which raves
Over the self-abandoned waves!

"Behold! like millions massed in battle,
The trembling billows headlong go,
Lashing the barren deeps, which rattle
In mighty transport, till they grow
All fruitful in their rocky home,
And burst from frenzy into foam.

"And look! where on the faithless billows
Lie women, and men, and children fair;
Some hanging, like sleep, to their swollen pillows,
With helpless sinews and streaming hair,
And some who plunge in the yawning graves!
Ah! lives there no strength beyond the waves?

"'T is said, the moon can rock the sea
From frenzy strange to silence mild —
To sleep — to death: — But where is *she*,
While now her storm-born giant child
Upheaves his shoulder to the skies?
Arise, sweet planet pale — arise!

"She cometh lovelier than the dawn
In summer, when the leaves are green —
More graceful than the alarmed fawn,
Over his grassy supper seen:
Bright quiet from her beauty falls,
Until — again the tempest calls!

"The supernatural Storm — he waketh
Again, and lo! from sheets all white,
Stands up into the stars, and shaketh
Scorn on the jewelled locks of night.
He carries a ship on his foaming crown,
And a cry, like hell, as he rushes down!

"And so still soars from calm to storm
The stature of the unresting sea:
So doth desire or wrath deform
Our else calm humanity —
Until at last we sleep,
And never wake nor weep,
(Hushed to death by some faint tune,)
In our grave beneath the moon!"

Jean Paul says that some souls fall from heaven like flowers, but that ere the pure and fresh buds have had time to open, they are trodden in the dust of the earth, and lie soiled and crushed beneath the foul tread of some brutal hoof. It was the fate of JOHN KEATS to illustrate, in some respects, this truth. He experienced more than the ordinary share of the world's hardness of heart, and had less than the ordinary share of sturdy strength to bear it. In him, an imagination and fancy of much natural capacity were lodged in a frame too weak to sus-

tain the shocks of life, and too sensitive for the development of high and sturdy thought. The great defect of his nature was a lack of force. Since his death, it has become a common cant to speak of him as possessing something Miltonic in his genius. It seems to us that this argues a misunderstanding of Keats as well as Milton. In all the din of this world's conflicts, — surrounded by the bitterest and basest adversaries, — hemmed in by calamities of the most terrible nature, — with nothing external on which to lean for support, — Milton still ever proved himself like "a seraph strong." Nothing on earth was mightier than his force of will. The intense depth and strength of his character, tested both in the endurance and repulse of evil, was the prominent element of his genius. He did not need that the wolves, and vultures, and all "those creeping things that riot in the decay of nobler natures," should suspend their tasks out of pity for him. He could exist, though the whole pack was howling and flapping around his very dwelling. This lofty independence of circumstances, this invulnerability of soul, is a part of Milton's genius. Neither "Comus" nor "Paradise Lost" could have been written without it.

Now, Keats belongs to a class of beings entirely different. His nature was essentially sensitive. Far from being independent of others, he held his life at the mercy of others. To murder him was a cowardly murder, yet who can expect magnanimity from bullies? But, had he possessed a great nature, he would not have been murdered, though all the critics of his time had leagued against him. William Gifford kill John Milton — why, he could not kill Leigh Hunt! There is danger in admitting a doctrine which places the life of the noblest

genius at the mercy of every liar and libeller that may lift his hoof against him. Keats died because he was weak — because, from the peculiar constitution or disease of his nature, he was unfitted to struggle with the calamities which beset actual life. "I feel the daisies growing over me," he said, on his death-bed. If any epitaph were put above him, he requested that it should be — "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." This is very affecting, but it is the opposite of Miltonic. We never pity Milton.

In his early poems, Keats appears as a kind of youthful Spenser, without Spenser's moral sense or judgment. His soul floats in a "sea of rich and ripe sensation." The odors, forms, sounds, and colors of nature, take him captive. There is little reäction of his mind on his sensations. He grows faint and languid with the excess of light and loveliness which stream into his soul. His individuality, without being merged in the objects of his thoughts, is narrowed and enfeebled. All that is mighty in nature and man is too apt to be "sicklied o'er" with fanciful sentimentalities. The gods are transformed into green girls, and the sublime and beautiful turned to "favor and to prettiness." Everything is luscious, sweet, dainty, and debilitating, in his sense of love and beauty. There are few hymns and numberless ditties. There is no descent into his soul of that spirit of Beauty, that "awful loveliness," before whose presence the poet's sensations are stilled, and in whose celebration his language is adoration. In the place of this, there is an all-absorbing relish and delicate perception of beauties, — a kind of feeding on "nectared sweets," — a glow of delight in the abandonment of the soul to soft and de-

licious images, framed by fancy out of rich sensations. It is rather reverie than inspiration.

This bewildering sense of physical pleasure was generally predominant in Keats. It was the source of the thousand affectations and puerilities which mar his poems, and it had a debilitating effect on his intellect. A keen sensitiveness of perception doubtless characterizes all great poets. Keats is supposed to have had more of this power, because he lacked other and equally important powers, or because it obtained over them such a mastery. No man ever possessed more fineness of sensibility to outward nature than Shelley, but it was developed in connection with a piercing intellect, which was never overcome with the mere deliciousness of things. He had altogether more depth of insight, nobler ideals, greater reach of thought and breadth of passion, a stronger hold upon existence, than Keats. The confounding of fine sensations with moral sense, the pleasurable with the right, is a great defect of Keats's poetry. If we compare him with Spenser, who possessed even a keener feeling of the physically delightful, and a richer imagination to mould it into dazzling shapes and fascinating images, we see that the most voluptuous descriptions of enchanting scenes and objects are heightened in their effect by being disposed according to moral and spiritual laws. Had Spenser been deficient in moral sense, "The Faery Queene" would have been made the most corrupting of all modern poems.

In his later works, the imagination of Keats was somewhat released from the thraldom of sensation, and evinced more independent power. "The Eve of St. Agnes" is delicately beautiful, and perfect of its kind; but it is not poetry of the highest order. The sense of luxury is its

predominant characteristic, and though full of exquisite fancies, it has no grand imaginations. "Hyperion" is altogether his noblest work, and contains passages of uncommon excellence. But through the whole of his poetry we think there is seen, in a greater or less degree, the qualities we have previously indicated. In the classification of poets, we have to take the general rule, and not the exceptions. That the poetry of Keats is full of beauties, that it evinces a most remarkable richness and sensitiveness of fancy and suggestiveness of imagination, that it contains passages of a certain rough sublimity seemingly above its general tone, and that it occasionally makes the "sense of satisfaction ache with the unreachable delicacy of its epithets," is cheerfully acknowledged by every one who reads poetry without having his fancy and imagination shut by prejudice; but that it evinces the force and fire, the depth, the grandeur, or the comprehensiveness, of a great nature, that it displays powers, — we will not say, like those of Milton, — but like those of either of the great poets of the nineteenth century, is a dogma to which neither the life nor the writings of Keats afford any adequate support.

Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn Law Rhymer, is one of the most characteristic of poets. The inspiration of his verse is a fiery hatred of injustice. Without possessing much creative power, he almost places himself beside men of genius by the singular intensity and might of his sensibility. He understands very well the art of condensing passion. "Spread out the thunder," says Schiller, "into its single tones, and it becomes a lullaby for children; pour it forth together, in one quick peal, and the royal sound shall move the heavens." The great ambition of Elliott is to thunder. He is a brawny man,

of nature's own make, with more than the usual portion of the ancient Adam stirring within him; and he says, "I do well to be angry." The mere sight of tyranny, bigotry, meanness, prompts his smiting invective. His poetry could hardly have been written by a man who was not physically strong. You can hear the ring of his anvil, and see the sparks fly off from his furnace, as you read his verse. He stoutly wrestles with the difficulties of utterance, and expresses himself by main force. His muscles seem made of iron. He has no fear and little mercy; and not only obeys the hot impulses of his sensibility, but takes a grim pleasure in piling fuel on the flame. He points the artillery of the devil against the devil's own legions. His element is a moral diabolism, compounded of wrath and conscience. When an abuse of government eats into his soul, he feels like Samson in the temple of the Philistines. There is a wonderful energy in many of his vituperative Corn Law Lyrics. In those poems in which the price of bread does not intrude, we see the nature of the man in a more orderly development; poems, which Mr. Griswold correctly describes as giving "simple, earnest, and true echoes of the affections," and as breathing the spirit of "a kind of primitive life, unperverted, unhackneyed, and fresh as the dews on his own hawthorn." The spirit of his other style may be partially seen in the following passionate "Corn Law Hymn."

"CORN LAW HYMN.

"Lord! call thy pallid angel—
The tamer of the strong!
And bid him whip with want and woe
The champions of the wrong!

O say not thou to ruin's flood,
'Up, sluggard! why so slow?'
But alone let them groan,
The lowest of the low;
And basely beg the bread they curse
Where millions curse them now!

"No; wake not thou the giant
Who drinks hot blood for wine;
And shouts unto the east and west
In thunder-tones like thine;
Till the slow to move rush all at once,
An avalanche of men,
While he raves over waves
That need no whirlwind then;
Though slow to move, moved all at once,
A sea, a sea of men!"

Through Elliott's poems the vast mass of English wretchedness and misery has found eloquent and piercing utterance. He speaks what thousands feel. Never was there a more terrible offering of hatred made by the squalor of a nation to its splendor — by the famine-wasted to the feast-fattened.

When Thomas Babington Macaulay appeared as a poet, it might have been expected that his muse would have been roughly treated by contemporary reviewers. As a critic, he had scattered numberless sarcasms, which could have appeared to their objects only in the light of gratuitous insults. No reviewer ever excelled him in adding to the torture of grave condemnation a sharper epigrammatic sting. The quick sagacity with which he detected faults was equalled only by his independence in lashing them — an independence which, always free from the impulses of fear, was sometimes superior to those of benevolence. His scorn had been launched at many authors, whose connection with influential jour-

nals gave them the means of anonymous retort. Yet we have seen no critiques of his Roman lays bearing the signs of malice or revenge. A few parodies and buffooneries, of the most harmless nature, were all that he had to bear.

The merits of Macaulay's poetry are similar to his prose, except that his verse is characterized by more imagination. The same living energy animates both. He is a man of the most extensive acquirements, possessing the power of representing his knowledge in magnificent pictures. He has a quick sympathy with whatever addresses the passions and the fancy, and a truly masculine mind. His style alternates between copiousness and condensation, and the transitions are contrived with consummate skill. The most brilliant and rapid of all contemporary writers, his poetry is an array of strong thoughts and glittering fancies bounding along on a rushing stream of feeling. It has almost the appearance of splendid impromptu composition. The "Lay" of "Virginia" contains some exquisite delineations of the affections, full of natural pathos and a certain serene beauty, somewhat different from Macaulay's usual martial tone. From Mr. Griswold's volume we select a piece, which has never been included in the editions of his writings. It shows not only a most minute knowledge of history, but an insight into the very spirit of the time to which it refers. The verse has a dashing, reckless, godless march, entirely in character with the feeling expressed. Prince Rupert's fiery dragoons would have sung it *con amore.*

"THE CAVALIER'S MARCH TO LONDON.

"To horse! to horse! brave cavaliers!
To horse for church and crown!

Strike, strike your tents! snatch up your spears!
And ho for London town!
The imperial harlot, doomed a prey
To our avenging fires,
Sends up the voice of her dismay
From all her hundred spires.

"The Strand resounds with maidens' shrieks,
The 'Change with merchants' sighs,
And blushes stand on brazen cheeks,
And tears in iron eyes;
And, pale with fasting and with fright,
Each Puritan committee
Hath summoned forth to prayer and fight
The Roundheads of the city.

"And soon shall London's sentries hear
The thunder of our drum,
And London's dames, in wilder fear,
Shall cry, Alack! They come!
Fling the fascines;—tear up the spikes;
And forward, one and all;
Down, down with all their train-band pikes,
Down with their mud-built wall!

"Quarter?—Foul fall your whining noise,
Ye recreant spawn of fraud!
No quarter! Think on Strafford, boys.
No quarter! Think on Laud.
What ho! The craven slaves retire.
On! Trample them to mud!
No quarter! Charge.—No quarter! Fire.
No quarter! Blood! blood! blood!—

"Where next? In sooth, there lacks no witch,
Brave lads, to tell us where,
Sure London's sons be passing rich,
Her daughters wondrous fair:
And let that dastard be the theme
Of many a board's derision,
Who quails for sermon, cuff, or scream,
Of any sweet precisian.

"Their lean divines, of solemn brow,
Sworn foes to throne and steeple,
From an unwonted pulpit now
Shall edify the people;
Till the tired hangman, in despair,
Shall curse his blunted shears,
And vainly pinch, and scrape and tear,
Around their leathern ears.

"We 'll hang, above his own Guildhall,
The city's grave Recorder,
And on the den of thieves we 'll fall,
Though Pym should speak to order.
In vain the lank-haired gang shall try
To cheat our martial law;
In vain shall Lenthall trembling cry
That strangers must withdraw.

'Of bench and woolsack, tub and chair,
We 'll build a glorious pyre,
And tons of rebel parchment there
Shall crackle in the fire.
With them shall perish, cheek by jowl,
Petition, psalm, and libel,
The colonel's canting muster-roll,
The chaplain's dog-eared Bible.

"We 'll tread a measure round the blaze
Where England's pest expires,
And lead along the dance's maze
The beauties of the friars:
Then smiles in every face shall shine,
And joy in every soul.
Bring forth, bring forth the oldest wine,
And crown the largest bowl!

"And as with nod and laugh ye sip
The goblet's rich carnation,
Whose bursting bubbles seem to tip
The wink of invitation,
Drink to those names, — those glorious names, —
Those names no time shall sever, —
Drink, in a draught as deep as Thames,
Our church and king forever!"

The poetry of the nineteenth century boasts more eminent women among its votaries than that of any other age. Among them Felicia Hemans, one of the best of her sex, enjoys preëminent popularity. Her poems are pure and sweet, dealing with the affections rather than the passions, and characterized throughout by an indescribable tone of holiness. She possessed a fine perception of moral beauty, and a rich fancy; but her writings are deficient in powerful imagination, except in some splendid passages. To enjoy her poetry, but little should be read at a time. It cloys with sweetness and tires with harmony. There is a serene beauty in her delineations of life and nature, eminently calculated to purify the affections, and introduce a habit of thoughtfulness into the mind; but they do not evince large mental resources. Two thirds of her writings are repetitions of herself. They enfeeble when taken in immoderate quantities. The pensive sadness diffused through them, when dwelt upon at too much length, is liable to make the soul daintily good, and sentimentally virtuous. She saw life through a medium of womanly sentiment, by which all her perceptions were unconsciously colored. Though individual, her individuality was neither broad nor intense. After all abatements, however, from the extravagant eulogies of her admirers, she must be allowed to possess a rare and truly feminine nature, endowed with uncommon refinement of thought and feeling, and to have written poetry of much originality and beauty.

We have no space to do justice to Joanna Baillie, whose mind occupies a neutral station between the masculine and feminine, with some of the best qualities of both. Her dramas are among the most excellent written

since the Elizabethan period, and display much comprehension. LETITIA E. LANDON, the pet of young ladies, wrote heaps of fanciful and passionate verse, with remarkable fluency and sameness of tone. It tells the old story of love and sorrow. MRS. NORTON, a woman of far higher order of mind, and greater depth of sensibility, and whose life has been tried by calamity and suffering, takes a high rank among the second class of poets. Her genius has some points in common with that of Byron. Much of her poetry has been inspired by individual experience of woe and wrong, and possesses a deep subjective character. She has a fine feeling for the beautiful, and much graceful facility of elegant expression. The poem called "Recollections," and the dedication of "The Dream," are among her most characteristic productions. MARY RUSSELL MITFORD, the kind-hearted and clear-headed author of "Our Village," has written two or three tragedies, containing much eloquent writing. "Rienzi" is a very good dramatic poem, with several passages of exceedingly nervous declamation. Miss Mitford, however, is best known by her sketches of country life, which, inimitable of their kind, have found readers all over the world, and converted every reader into a friend. Her humor and pathos, as displayed in these, are exquisitely fine and feminine; and "Our Village" is a permanent addition to one of the most beautiful departments of English literature.

But probably the greatest female poet that England has ever produced, and one of the most unreadable, is ELIZABETH B. BARRETT. In the works of no woman have we ever observed so much grandeur of imagination, disguised, as it is, in an elaborately infelicitous style.

She has a large heart and a large brain; but many of her thoughts are hooded eagles. That a woman of such varied acquirements, of so much delicacy of sentiment and depth of feeling, of so much holiness and elevation of thought, possessing, too, an imagination of such shaping power and piercing vision, should not consent always to write English, should often consent to manufacture a barbarous jargon compounded of all languages, is a public calamity. "The Cry of the Human," to her, is, "Be more intelligible." The scholar who was in the custom of "unbending himself over the lighter mathematics" might find an agreeable recreation in Miss Barrett's abstruse windings of thought, and terrible phalanxes of Greek and German expressions. A number of her poems are absolutely good for nothing, from their harshness and obscurity of language. Her mind has taken its tone and character from the study of Æschylus, Milton, and the Hebrew poets; and she is more familiar with them than with the world. Vast and vague imaginations, excited by such high communion, float duskily before her mind, and she mutters mysteriously of their majestic presence; but she does not always run them into intelligible form. We could understand this, if she displayed any lack, on other occasions, of high imagination; but her frequent inexpressiveness is a voluntary offering on the altar of obscurity. "We understand a fury in the words, but not the words." In one of her sonnets, "The Soul's Expression," we are made acquainted with her condition of mind, when she wishes to utter her deep imaginings. Nothing could better represent a heart possessed by the mightiest poetic feeling, yet awed before its own mystical emotions. It is the soul "falling away from the imagination."

"THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.

"With stammering lips, and insufficient sound,
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night
Both dream, and thought, and feeling interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height,
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground!
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air —
But if I did it, — as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud — my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul."

Miss Barrett's genius, though subjective in its general character, is of considerable range. She is especially powerful in dealing with the affections. Her religious poetry is characterized by a most intense and solemn reverence for divine things, and often swells into magnificent bursts of rapture and adoration. Her feeling for humanity is deep and tender, and she has a warm sympathy with its wants and immunities. Her sonnets, though of various degrees of merit, and some of them crabbed in their versification, have generally a rough grandeur which is very imposing. "The Drama of Exile," though teeming with faults, has noble traits of intellect and passion, which no faults can conceal. Many of her minor pieces show a most delicate perception of beauty and sentiment, expressed with much simplicity and melody of style.

P. J. Bailey, the author of "Festus," is one of the most remarkable men among the poets of the present century. His egotism almost approaches that point of the sublime where it topples over into the ridiculous.

He chooses the most lofty subjects, without seeming to doubt his capacity to grapple with their mysteries. He plagiarizes from authors whose names he would not condescend to mention. He hardly realizes the existence of others, except so far as they are related to himself. In "Festus" he displays at times a certain "lust of power, a hunger and thirst after unrighteousness, a glow of imagination unhallowed save by its own energies," which well indicates the element of daring in which his nature moves. To most readers, the poem would appear a monstrous compound of blasphemy and licentiousness. Though evincing power, and variety of power, it excites the most wonder from its disregard of all the moral, religious, and artistical associations of others. Pantheism and fatalism, in their most objectionable forms, are inculcated as absolute truth. The two flaming ideas in his mind are God and Lucifer. One of his scenes occurs "Anywhere," and another "Everywhere." The merest commonplaces of antagonistical systems of philosophy and religion are all mingled together in the chaos of his theory. Occasionally all regard for the proprieties of the diabolic is eschewed. The devil falls violently in love in one place; and in another scolds the damned like a Billingsgate fish-woman. He reproves his friends for laziness, telling them that they do not earn enough to pay for the fire that burns them up. Human passions and human ideas Bailey continually blends with things superhuman and divine. Doctrines of the most monstrous import, and doctrines of the utmost purity and holiness, so follow each other, that the author evidently notices no discord in their connection. He can delineate the passion of love with great refinement, without seeming to distinguish it from the most unhallowed

ust. If he be not mad, it is certain that all the rest of the world are. To accept the poem of "Festus" as the product of a sane mind, would be to declare all other literature superficial, and P. J. Bailey the most miraculously gifted of created men. Its madness is not altogether fine madness, but half comes from Parnassus and the rest from Bedlam. It is the madness of a mind unable accurately to distinguish the moral and intellectual differences of things.

The interest of the poem arises from its intensity of sensibility, its affluence of fancy, and occasional power of imagination. Numerous passages might be selected of the greatest beauty and majesty. The author's insight into particular truths is often very acute, and his command of expression seemingly despotic. He has no fear of startling his reader with a grotesque image, or a strange verbal combination, or downright bombast and buffoonery. So intense and lofty is his egotism, that he seems to think all minds will bend their tastes and their common sense to him. He ends his poem, at the age of twenty-three, with saying, "Take it, world." He swaggers and bullies his readers into panegyric. There is no instance in English literature of so much self-exaggeration on the part of any author untrammelled by a straitjacket. The poem indicates the last result of the "Satanic School," in the triumph of sensibility over reason. A German prince, whose taste was of the "classical" order, once said, that if he were the Almighty, and could have foreseen before creating the world that Schiller's "Robbers" would have been written in it, that alone would have prevented him from creating the world. What this gentleman would have said of Bailey's "Festus," it would task exaggeration itself to tell.

Amidst the chaos of this work, are passages of great grandeur and beauty. The intense seriousness of the author gives to the whole a character of sincerity, which redeems it from the charge of intentional irreverence or immorality. We quote a few of Mr. Griswold's extracts from the poem, in partial illustration of its spirit and power.

FESTUS DESCRIBES HIS FRIEND.

"He had no time to study, and no place;
All places and all times to him were one.
His soul was like the wind-harp, which he loved,
And sounded only when the spirit blew;
Sometimes in feasts and follies, for he went
Life-like through all things; and his thoughts then rose
Like sparkles in the bright wine, brighter still;
Sometimes in dreams, and then the shining words
Would wake him in the dark before his face.
All things talked thoughts to him. The sea went mad
To show his meaning; and the awful sun
Thundered his thoughts into him; and at night
The stars would whisper theirs, the moon sigh hers;
He spake the world's one tongue; in earth and heaven
There is but one, it is the word of truth."

ANGELA.

"I loved her, for that she was beautiful,
And that to me she seemed to be all nature
And all varieties of things in one;
Would set at night in clouds of tears, and rise
All light and laughter in the morning; fear
No petty customs nor appearances;
But think what others only dreamed about;
And say what others did but think; and do
What others would but say; and glory in
What others dared but do; — it was these which won me;
And that she never schooled within her breast
One thought or feeling, but gave holiday

To all; and that she told me all her woes
And wrongs and ills; and so she made them mine
In the communion of love; and we
Grew like each other, for we loved each other;
She, mild and generous as the sun in spring;
And I, like earth, all budding out with love.
The beautiful are never desolate;
For some one always loves them — God or man.
If man abandons, God himself takes them.
And thus it was. She whom I once loved died."

A LETTER.

"When he hath had
A letter from his lady dear, he blessed
The paper that her hand had travelled over
And her eye looked on, and would think he saw
Gleams of that light she lavished from her eyes,
Wandering amid the words of love she 'd traced
Like glow-worms among beds of flowers. He seemed
To bear with being but because she loved him;
She was the sheath wherein his soul had rest,
As hath a sword from war."

THE END OF LIFE.

"We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives,
Who thinks most; feels the noblest; acts the best;
And he whose heart beats quickest lives the longest;
Lives in one hour more than in years do some
Whose fat blood sleeps as it slips along their veins.
Life is but a means unto an end; that end,
Beginning, mean, and end to all things — God.
The dead have all the glory of the world."

We might easily fill up this number of our review by continuing our observation on individual poets in Mr. Griswold's volume. In what we have said, we have not aimed at any thorough criticism on the poets we have

separately considered, but we have merely thrown off such observations on their life and poetical character as were suggested by their present relation to the public, and to current codes of criticism. Of course, in so large a tract of thought and imagination, variegated by so many individualities of character, there is room for the exercise of different opinions. We are sorry if ours have been tainted with an oracular tone. The estimate formed of a poet is generally determined by the point of view from which he is surveyed. In the survey of a considerable number, there is danger that we may not shift our position with a change in the objects to be seen. Every original poet should doubtless be judged by the laws which inhere in his own writings, and not by laws evolved from other and different writings. But it is difficult to decide at exactly what point a poet becomes a law unto himself; and difficult, also, to estimate the exact value of his originality, and consequently his relative position among men of genius, after it is decided. The poetic faculty is exceedingly elastic, and all its manifestations in individuals cannot be included in a general criticism. In poems of moderate merit, we are occasionally struck with fine imaginations, which seem to give the lie to the charge of mediocrity. After a critic has most painfully elaborated his opinion of an author, any tyro can quote lines or passages which seem to conflict with it. From the extreme sensitiveness of the imagination, a poet of small original capacity sometimes catches the tone of the great authors he has read, and by blending it with what individuality of thought and feeling there is in him, often contrives to puzzle reviewers and delude readers. In a literature like that of the present century, in which sensibility and per-

sonal feeling are such prominent elements, imitators are more likely to make a respectable show than if they copied from Spenser or Pope. A few grains of fancy, whirled about in a gust of simulated passion, will often pass as poetry. Many of the deep and delicate imaginations which Wordsworth and Shelley originated have now become common property, and are reproduced in common poems. The spirit of both colors the thoughts of many poets, who, without being deficient in genius, have still looked at man and nature, not with their own eyes, but with those of the poets whose genius has conquered theirs. In this blending of minds, our object should be to discriminate between what the disciple has obtained from the master, and what he has added to the master. According to the force of being which a poet possesses, will be his resistance of influences coming from other minds. Many of the poets from whom Mr. Griswold has selected have more of the repeater than the creator. In others there is a mingling of what has grown up in their minds with what has been caught from other minds. Consequently, in reading a volume with so many claimants on our attention, it is important to keep in view the character and spirit of the originating intellects, in order rightly to dispose the others in the sliding-scale of merit. In reviewing so many poets in succession, a critic must consider their relative as well as intrinsic excellence; and in doing this he is ever liable to disappoint the admirers of each.

With all abatements, however, no one can glance at Mr. Griswold's volume without being impressed with the fertility of the present century in original poetry. There is one view in which the editor of a work like the present may be considered fortunate. Through his diligent labors

large bodies of the people, who cannot or will not read extensively, are enabled to obtain an image of the imaginative literature of a great age. And what a world of thought and feeling does its contemplation reveal to us! Here are garnered up chronicles of the insight and experience of highly-gifted natures, many of them sorely tried by sorrow and temptation, and uttering words of profoundest meaning while bending beneath the burden of actual life. Here flame the woes and wrongs that stung their spirits; here shine the majestic and ennobling thoughts by which calamity was consecrated. Here Passion revels in fantasies of maddening beauty; here the unselfish affections beam on our souls in the softest and most witching hues of fancy; here Imagination illumines the page with light from heaven, and sheds on the hut and the palace a glory not of earth; here Religion beckons to the skies. Love is here; Love, "whose familiar voice wearies not ever," speaking a language which

"Trembles and sparkles as with ecstasy;"

and here are suffering and pain and death. Wise words are here; words which "beacon the rocks on which high hearts are wrecked"—which bear messages of measureless import to thrill the soul with gladness, or awe it into meekness—which teach the awful significance of God's handwriting on the heart. All grades of beauty are here, from the sylvan quiet of pastoral scenery to the "tempestuous loveliness of terror,"—all aspects of sorrow, from the most pensive melancholy to that agony and anguish which cries aloud in bitterness of spirit. The veil which conceals the workings of powerful but perverted hearts is rent; and we gaze with shuddering

interest into the chaotic depths of passion, wrought into consuming intensity by maddening calamities. That a poetry so various, so "rammed with life," must contain much exaggerated representation, much false and morbid feeling, much varnishing of vice and beautifying of corruption, is true; but then it contains much more to purify and exalt; to give us knowledge and power; to infuse into our souls a thirst to promote human liberty and happiness; to make us feel the holiness of disinterested affection; to kindle in our hearts a passionate love for all that is beautiful and good; to lift our thoughts into serener regions of existence than actual life furnishes; to fill our imaginations with images of loveliness and grandeur, which shall solace disappointment and people solitude; to enable us to interpret aright the sublime language, written all over the universe, in which nature teaches her lessons of wisdom and power; and to penetrate our whole being with an intense enthusiasm for virtue and truth, which shall bear the soul bravely up amid the coldness and baseness of the world, and inspire it with a lofty confidence in those eternal realities, before which all the world's games and gauds shrivel into ashes.

SOUTH'S SERMONS.*

No explorer of the thorny tracts of theology can ever forget his exhilaration of spirit on first reading the sermons of Dr. South, the shrewdest, sharpest, bitterest, and wittiest of English divines. His character, formed by a curious interpenetration of strong prejudices and great powers, and colored by the circumstances of his age and position, is one of the most peculiar in English literature, and, as displayed in his works, repays the most assiduous study. In some points he reminds us of Sydney Smith, though distinguished from him by many striking individual traits, and utterly opposed to him in political sentiment and principle. He is a grand specimen of the old tory; and he enforced his toryism with a courage, heartiness, and wealth of intellectual resources, to which the warmest radical could hardly refuse admiration and respect.

South was born in 1633. He was the son of an eminent London merchant. In 1647, he was admitted a king's scholar at Westminster, at the period when Dr. Busby was master of the school. On the day of the execution of King Charles the First, or, to use his own words, "on that black and eternally infamous day of the

* Sermons preached upon several Occasions. By Robert South, D.D., Prebendary of Westminster, and Canon of Christ's Church, Oxford. A new edition, including the Posthumous Discourses. Philadelphia: Sorin & Ball. 4 vols. 8vo. — *North American Review, October*, 1846.

king's murder, an hour or two before his sacred head was cut off," the Doctor prayed for the king by name, while reading Latin prayers at the school. In 1651, he entered Oxford, at the same time that John Locke was admitted, — the future champion of the divine right of kings, in company with the future champion of freedom. In 1655, he took his degree of Bachelor of Arts, and wrote a copy of Latin verses congratulating Cromwell on the peace made with the Dutch. Although this was a college exercise, and the theme probably selected for him, and not by him, it must have been a most galling recollection, in after years, when he was writing down the great Protector as an "execrable monster," and comparing him to Baal and Beelzebub. At college he seems to have been a severe student, both in the acquisition of knowledge and in the training of his faculties for the gladiatorial contests of professional life. He was ordained by one of the deprived bishops in 1658; and soon won the good-will of the Presbyterians by a sermon directed against the Independents. In 1660, he was made University Orator, and in July of the same year, he preached his celebrated discourse, "The Scribe Instructed," before the king's commissioners, who met at Oxford soon after the restoration, for the visitation of the University. South at this time was twenty-seven years old; and the sermon, in respect to style, arrangement, and strength of intellect and character, is one of his greatest and most characteristic productions, and indicates both the bias and energy of his mind. It especially displays that masterly arrangement of his matter, that thorough comprehension of his subject, and that vitality and vividness of expression, which have given his sermons with some a place in literature even higher than in divinity.

The object of the discourse is to set forth the qualifications of the Christian preacher, and to show by ridicule and argument the absurdity and wickedness involved in assuming to be a minister of the word without competent ability, knowledge, and preparation. He especially insists on intellectual qualifications, and their improvement by habitual exercise. Defining divinity as "a doctrine treating of the nature, attributes, and works of the great God, as he stands related to rational creatures, and the way how rational creatures may serve, worship, and enjoy him," he asks if a doctrine of that "depth, that height, that vast compass, grasping within it all the perfections and dimensions of human science, does not worthily claim all the preparations whereby the wit and industry of man can fit him for it?" He opposes levity and stupidity as the two faults of most sermon-mongers, — those who put their prayers in such a dress as if they did not "supplicate, but compliment Almighty God," and those who lie "grovelling on the ground with a dead and contemptible flatness," passing off dulness as a mark of regeneration. The most splendid part of the sermon is the passage relating to the eloquence of the Bible, in which South enforces the duty of the minister to employ rich and significant expression in conveying the truths of the Gospel. As he fears that this may bring down the opposition of such as call speaking "coherently upon any sacred subject an offering of strange fire, and account the being pertinent even the next door to the being profane," he adduces Scripture authority for magnificence of language, and boldly pronounces the Bible a system of the best rhetoric, as well as a body of religion. "As the highest things," he says, "require the highest expressions, so we shall find nothing in Scripture so high

in itself, but it is reached, and sometimes overtopped, by the sublimity of the expression."

The passions he deems to have been more powerfully described by the Hebrew than the heathen poets. "Where do we read," he asks, "such strange risings and fallings, now the faintings and languishings, now the terrors of astonishment, venting themselves in such high amazing strains, as in Psalm lxxvii.? Or where did we ever find sorrow flowing forth in such a natural prevailing pathos as in the lamentations of Jeremy? One would think that every letter was written with a tear, every word was the noise of a breaking heart; that the author was a man compacted of sorrows, disciplined to grief from his infancy, — one who never breathed but in sighs, nor spoke but in a groan." He pounces upon Politian, for saying that he abstained from reading the Scriptures, for fear they would spoil his style, and calls him a blockhead as well as an atheist, — one who had "as small a gust for the elegances of expression as the sacredness of the matter." There are few clergymen who would not find the reading of this sermon profitable, and few parishioners who would not be grateful if its advice were followed.

No one could have heard or read this discourse without perceiving that a powerful and daring character was rising in the church, — one who could enforce and defend her doctrines and discipline with all the energy of a fanatic, and all the acuteness of a philosopher. South was soon after made domestic chaplain to Clarendon. In January, 1662–3, he preached before King Charles the Second, at Whitehall, on occasion of the anniversary of the "execrable murder of King Charles the First, of glorious memory," his celebrated sermon, "Pretence of

Conscience no Excuse for Rebellion." This is a perfect shriek of loyalty; and although South's discourses are all more or less sprinkled with bitter allusions to the political and religious conduct of the parliamentarians, it is in this sermon that his zeal and rage rise to their most portentous excesses. He loses here that quiet command of his hatred which makes the gibes and jests directed against the Puritans in "The Scribe Instructed" so galling and effective. He dedicates the sermon to the "never-dying memory" of Charles the First, and adds, as a precious piece of history, that he was "*causelessly* rebelled against, inhumanly imprisoned, and at length barbarously murdered before the gates of his own palace, by the worst of men and the most obliged of subjects."

The sermon itself is well worthy of the dedication. The fiery spirit of the preacher throws off at times splendid specimens of vehement rhetoric,

> "that bound and blaze along
> Their devious course, magnificently wrong;"

but the whole sermon seems at this day rather a caricature than a panegyric of the monarch; — a man sedulous of propriety rather than virtue, whose misfortune it was to embody all the characteristics of political crime but its energies, and who, in his dealings with his adversaries, trusted to systematic falsehood as the means by which in the end he could "feed fat the hungry grudges of his smiling rancor and his cringing pride." Charles is here represented, or rather misrepresented, as the perfection of kings and men. South tells us that he was a David, a saint, a king. He had so many excellences, that he would have deserved a kingdom, had he not inherited one His genius was so controlling, that in

every science he attempted he did not so much study as reign. His writings have such a commanding and majestic pathos, that they seem to have been written with a sceptre instead of a pen. He was pious beyond expression; as eminent for frequenting the temple as Solomon was for building one; could defend his religion as a king, dispute for it as a divine, and die for it as a martyr. If ever the lion and the lamb dwelt together, it was in his royal breast. He was, indeed, a prince whose virtues were as prodigious as his sufferings, and "a father of his country, if but for this only, that he was the father of such a son." It is but justice to say that Charles the Second had not at this time fully developed his large capacities for knavery and licentiousness, nor attempted to barter away the rights and interests of his people to pay the expenses of his debaucheries.

The persons who arrayed themselves against Charles the First were, we are told, the most unnatural of traitors. In the first stage of their rebellion, they invented the "covenant," like those who are said to have made a "covenant with hell and an agreement with death." This was the most solemn piece of perjury, the most fatal engine against the church, the bane of monarchy, the greatest snare of souls, and mystery of iniquity, that ever was hammered out by the wit and wickedness of man. The king was murdered by the refuse of his people, the scum of the nation,—that is, by what at that time was the uppermost and basest part of it. Like Actæon, he was torn by a pack of bloodhounds. The difference between being conquered and slain by another king, and being killed by infamous rebels, was the difference between being torn by a lion and being eat up with vermin. His sufferings it is no blasphemy to com

pare with Christ's, though his murderers were worse than the Jews. With devilish ingenuity, they proposed various ways for putting him to death, — all methods which either their malice could suggest, or their own guilt deserve. After his death they tried to assassinate his name and butcher his reputation, — to such a height of tyranny did the remorseless malice of these embittered rebels rise. They searched his dead body to see if he was not infected with some disgraceful disease. But such maladies were confined to his murderers, — to such men as Clement and Peters. The body of Charles had none of the ruins and genteel rottenness of modern debauchery. It was firm and clear, like his conscience; he fell like the cedar, no less fragrant than tall and stately. All who opposed Charles are treated by South with remorseless severity. Sir Harry Vane is "that worthy knight who was executed on Tower-hill;" Milton is "the Latin advocate, who, like a blind adder, has spit so much venom on the king's person and cause."

It is curious, in reading this sermon, and some of Milton's prose, to note the extraordinary virulence and remorselessness with which the paper wars of that time were conducted. Controversialists represented each other more as fiends than men; and mutual denunciation foamed into madness. South writes with the impatience and rage of a man who would sweep, if he could, the enemies of church and king to perdition with one wave of his pen. He says, "I do well to be angry." Milton's rage is deeper and more condensed, and prompts more awful denunciations. Thus, at the end of the sublime prose hymn which concludes his early work, "Of Reformation in England," he prays that those "who, by impairing and diminution of the true faith,

the distresses and servitude of their country, aspire to high dignity, rule, and promotion here, after a shameful end in this life, (which God grant them,) shall be thrown down eternally into the darkest and deepest gulf of hell, where, under the despiteful control, the trample and spurn, of all the other damned, that in the anguish of their torture shall have no other ease than to exercise a raving and bestial tyranny over them as their slaves and negroes, they shall remain in that plight forever, the basest, the lowermost, the most dejected, most underfoot and downtrodden vassals of perdition." The whole royalist body, in the maddest excesses of their rhetorical execrations, could not have gone beyond this determined and terrible invective. There is nothing in South's writings which approaches it in stern and superhuman, if not inhuman, severity.

In November, 1662, South preached at St. Paul's his sermon on "Man Created in the Image of God." This we deem, on the whole, his greatest production. It stands, with that of Chillingworth on the Form and Spirit of Godliness, in the very front rank of sermons. It is, perhaps, the best and fairest expression of South's mind, considered apart from its inveterate prejudices, and indicates the capacity of his intellect and imagination in the region of pure thought. In this discourse he draws a portrait of the ideal man, as he supposes him to have existed in paradise, and states what constitutes perfection in the understanding, will, passions, and affections. The vigor and clearness of thought and expression in this noble treatise on human nature would alone be sufficient to place South high on the sliding-scale of English prose writers. There runs through the discourse a tone of majestic pathos and regret, arising from the contrast be-

tween the real and the ideal man. Several sentences remind us of Pascal. South, too, exalts the dignity of human nature, while mourning over its fall. We may, he says, "collect the excellency of the understanding then, by the glorious remainders of it now, and guess at the stateliness of the building by the magnificence of its ruins." "And certainly that must have needs been very glorious, the decays of which are so admirable. He that is comely when old and decrepit, surely was very beautiful when he was young. An Aristotle was but the rubbish of an Adam, and Athens but the rudiments of paradise."

A man who had thus signalized himself both by his powers and his loyalty could not escape notice and preferment. In 1663, he was made prebendary of Westminster; in 1670, canon of Christ Church, Oxford. In 1677, he accompanied, as chaplain, Lawrence Hyde, the son of Clarendon, sent by Charles the Second ambassador to Poland. On the 30th of April, 1678, we find him returned, and preaching at Oxford. In his sermon on Christ's Promise the Support of Ministers, he has some remarks which seem directed against Jeremy Taylor. He recommends plainness and simplicity of speech to the minister, and, alluding to St. Paul's mode of teaching, he says, — "Nothing here of the 'fringes of the North Star;' nothing of 'nature's becoming unnatural;' nothing of the 'down of angel's wings,' or the 'beautiful locks of cherubims;' no starched similitudes, introduced with a 'Thus have I seen a cloud rolling in its airy mansion,' and the like. No, these were sublimities above the rise of the apostolic spirit. For the Apostles, poor mortals, were content to take lower steps, and to tell the world, in plain terms, that he who believed should be saved, and that he who believed not

should be damned." There is a good deal more about gaudery, frisking it in tropes, fine conceits, and airy fancies, shooting over men's heads while professing to aim at their hearts, — all of which might seem to have been levelled at Taylor, by one whose energetic and fiery spirit could ill brook the "process of smoothness and delight" by which the sweet poet of theology would draw men into heaven. South, also, in this sermon, darts with his usual practical acuteness on the motives which animated many of the opponents of the church in their dolorous complaints. When they desire to get the clergy under their feet, then the clergy are too high and proud. "When avarice disposes men to be rapacious and sacrilegious, then forthwith the church is too rich." And when, by gaming and revelling, these same men have disabled themselves from paying their butchers, brewers, and vintners, "then immediately they are all thunder and lightning against the intemperance and luxury of the clergy, forsooth, and high time it is for a thorough reformation."

In 1681, South preached before the king, at Westminster, his sermon on "All Contingencies directed by Providence." In this discourse, he referred to the impossibility of foreseeing the tremendous results of small things on the stability and happiness of states; and, after giving two instances drawn from history, he exclaimed, — "And who that had beheld such a bankrupt, beggarly fellow as Cromwell, first entering the Parliament House with a threadbare, torn cloak, and a greasy hat, (and perhaps neither of them paid for,) could have suspected that, in the space of so few years, he should, by the murder of one king and the banishment of another, ascend the throne, be invested in the royal robes, and

want nothing of the state of a king but the changing of his hat into a crown?" Charles laughed heartily at this, and said, turning to Hyde, "Odsfish! your chaplain must be a bishop; therefore put me in mind of him at the next death." It was the misfortune of South to preach his doctrines of passive obedience, and God's particular care of kings, in the reign of a good-natured rascal, who had not a single quality of majesty, to sustain the theory of the divine by the example of the monarch. South seems to have been ambitious rather to be the champion of the church than to enjoy its high and lucrative offices. He repeatedly declined preferment. In the reign of James the Second, though he disliked the measures of that monarch relating to popery, he would not oppose him, and when pressed to sign the invitation to the Prince of Orange, steadily refused. After the revolution, he rather submitted to the new government than acknowledged it. He might have had one of the vacant bishoprics, had he pleased; but he felt too strong a sympathy with the nonjurors to step into any of their late offices. The rest of his life was spent in the same unwavering devotion to the church which had characterized his youth and manhood. He opposed all measures to produce a union of dissenting Protestants that involved the slightest sacrifice of the forms and ceremonies of the church. He died July 8, 1716, after a long life of intellectual labor. His biography is to be read in his sermons. In them are chronicled the results of his studies, the opinions he entertained of men and measures, the thoughts he grasped in contemplation, the passions he felt in actual life; and on them is impressed the undeniable marks of the daring, straightforward character of the man.

In both his life and writings, South presents himself as a man of more than ordinary dimensions. His understanding was large, strong, and acute, grappling every subject he essayed to treat with a stern grasp, and tearing and ripping up, with a peculiar intellectual fierceness, systems and principles which contradicted his own. He possessed a constant sense of inward strength, and whatever province of thought he willed to make his own, always yielded to his unceasing and unwearied effort. Difficulties and obstacles, in conception or expression, instead of daunting him, only seemed to rouse new energies of passion, and set his mind on fire. Many sentences in his works seem torn from his brain by main strength, expressing not only the thought he intended to convey, but a kind of impatient rage that it did not come with less labor. He wrote, probably, from his own consciousness, when he represented study as racking the inward and destroying the outward man, — as clothing the soul with the spoils of the body; "and like a stronger blast of lightning, not only melts the sword, but consumes the scabbard." And again, in another connection, he calls truth a great stronghold, barred and fortified by God and nature, and diligence the understanding's laying siege to it. "Sometimes it thinks it gains a point; and presently, again, it finds itself baffled and beaten off; yet still it renews the onset, attacks the difficulty afresh, plants this reasoning and that argument, this consequence and that distinction, like so many intellectual batteries, till at length it forces a way and passage into the obstinate enclosed truth that so long withstood and defied all its assaults." To great sharpness and penetration of intellect, which pierced and probed whatever it attacked, he joined a peculiar vividness of conception, to

which we can give no more appropriate name than imagination. In almost every subject which he treats, he not merely reasons powerfully, but he sees clearly; and it is this bright inward vision of his theme that he most warmly desires to convey to the reader. Like every truly great thinker, he thinks close to things, without the intervention of words, and masters the objects of his contemplation before he seeks to give them expression. His style, therefore, has singular intensity, vitality, and richness. It expresses not only the thought, but the thought as modified by the character of the thinker. In this respect he is among the most original of writers. His commonplaces never appear echoes of other minds, but truths which he has himself seen and proved. The strange and strained conceits, the harsh metaphors, which, when tried by general principles of taste, must be conceded to disfigure many of his sermons, are still legitimate offsprings of a mind passionately in earnest to fix and express some "slippery uncertainties," some fugitive and elusive thoughts, whose bright faces shone on his mind but a moment, and then flitted away into darkness. The coarse expressions and comparisons in his writings are also indicative of his impatience at all coquetry with language, and his disposition to give things their appropriate garniture of words. If the expression disgusts, the object of the preacher is attained, for disgust at the expression is naturally transferred to the thing which he desires to make disgusting. Thus, when he wishes to indicate the disproportion between the pleasures of the thinking and the eating man, he represents them to be as different "as the silence of Archimedes in the study of a problem, and the stillness of a sow at her wash." Again, when he desires to make graphically evident that

pleasure is merely a relative term, and consists in the suitableness of objects to varying conditions of character, — that what is pleasure to one man is pain to another, he declares that "the pleasures of an angel can never be the pleasures of a hog." His works would furnish numberless instances of the same felicity of vulgar allusion. Indeed, he lived among a generation of sinners, whose consciences were not assailable by smooth circumlocutions, and whose vices required the scourge and the hot iron. He vividly perceived the baseness and contemptible nature of sin, through all the gilded shows in which it was encased, and could draw from natural objects no images which he thought too foul and hateful to picture it to the imagination.

The intensity of feeling and thinking which burns throughout South's writings has no parallel in English theology. It resembles the unwearied fire of the epic poet. If it had been allied to a shaping and fusing imagination, like that of Milton, the Puritans would not, perhaps, have produced the only great poet of that age. As it is, we doubt if, in the single quality of freshness and force of expression, of rapid and rushing life, any writer of English prose, from Milton to Burke, equalled South. In him, this animation is not confined to particular passages or sermons, but glows and leaps through the whole body of his writings. His vast command of language, and his power of infusing the energy of his nature into almost every phrase and image, would make his sermons worthy the attention of all students of expression, even if they were not fascinating for their sparkling good sense in questions of social morals, and the vigor of intellect brought to the discussion of controverted points in theology and government.

The wit of South is bountifully sprinkled over his sermons, and it is by this quality that he is most commonly known. He uses it often as a gleaming weapon of attack and defence. It is, however, no light and airy plaything with him, but generally a severe and masculine power. It gleams brightest and cuts sharpest, when its possessor is most enraged and indignant. Though sometimes exhibited in sly thrusts, shrewd innuendoes, insinuating mockeries, and a kind of raillery half playful and half malicious, it is more commonly exercised to hold up adversaries to contempt and scorn, to pierce iniquity and falsehood with shafts that wound as well as glisten, or to evade logical dilemmas by a lightning-like substitution of an analogy of fancy for one of the reason. In many cases, it makes his understanding play the part of a partisan, on subjects where it is abundantly able to act the judge. So fertile was his mind in ingenious turns, quirks, and analogies, that an epigram often misled him from his logic; and to fix an unanswerable jest upon an opponent was as pleasing as to gravel him with an unanswerable argument. Thus, the Puritanic party were continually putting forward the phrase *liberty of conscience*, as the object of their struggles. A mind like South's would evade the justice of such a plea somewhat in this wise. Conscience suggests piety and honesty. Now, among the Puritans were many notorious hypocrites and sharpers. The cry of conscience, of course, would be with them a mere disguise for selfish objects. Consequently, what the Puritans wanted was not liberty *of* conscience, but liberty *from* conscience. The inward delight following such a dexterous turn of words, embodying a principle but partially true, would prevent South from pursuing the subject further or rescuing his

argument from the fallacy into which it had been seduced by epigram. Most of his sermons bearing upon dissenters and republicans swarm with sophisms of a similar character, in which there is just enough truth to give a practical application to the shining edge of the wit. A party, however, which had all its badges and watchwords so caricatured or distorted, would find more difficulty in gaining proselytes than if the falsehood of its principles had been demonstrated by unimpeachable arguments.

Yet, with all his understanding, learning, and wit, South was a fanatic and a bigot in everything which concerned church and state. To the dominion of a few contemptible maxims, which we can hardly conceive the feeble intellects and abject spirits of Charles's courtiers to have honestly admitted, did this independent, dogmatic, fierce, and defying controversialist surrender his splendid talents and accomplishments. It is difficult to believe that his mind voluntarily submitted to this slavery, though there is no evidence that it was not self-imposed. The only explanation we can give is, that his nature early received a strong bias, by the pressure of external circumstances, towards the royal cause. He was naturally exceedingly sensitive to the ridiculous side of things, and naturally impatient and choleric. To a man thus constituted, a prejudice imbibed against the persons connected with a cause is equivalent to a hatred of the cause itself; and when this prejudice deepens into a principle, large powers of intellect more readily subserve than oppose it. Now, South saw the ridiculous and selfish side of Puritanism and its affiliated political doctrines, with the keenest glance. He had frequented the conventicles in his youth. All that was grotesque

presumptuous, ignorant, cruel, senseless, and hypocritical, in the different sects of the time, he had seen embodied in appropriate persons. The "blessed breathings," the "heavenly hummings and hawings," the various transparent veils through which hypocrisy is visible to the eye of wit, were familiar to his mind. He must gradually have formed the opinion that the whole movement with which these were accidentally connected was one of mingled knavery and folly, and could end only in the destruction of social and religious order. If, instead of imbibing his first impressions of civil and religious liberty at the time of Cromwell, he had lived in an earlier day, and been one of those who met at Lord Falkland's house, with Selden and Chillingworth, to discuss the constitutionality of the latest act of the king, or the sanity of the latest foolery of Laud, his mind would never have been forced into the vassalage of such degrading errors as it ultimately defended. As it was, however, the man of intelligence scoffed at the narrowness, the man of learning at the ignorant fanaticism, and the man of wit at the costume and affectations, of the enthusiasts whom he daily met, without considering that their cause was the cause of English liberty, and their madness the result of ecclesiastical tyranny. With these impressions of the Puritans, it was natural that he should be shocked at "such a pack of incendiaries" assuming to be ministers of the Gospel, and, as it appeared to him, preaching schism, lecturing men into sacrilege, praying them into rebellion, beheading princes, and overthrowing a church and monarchy which seemed strong with the strength of a divine right. At the restoration of Charles the Second, it was natural, too, that he should be drunk with loyalty, in common with other

men of a less fiery temper and less determined prejudices. That he was honest in his bigotry, there can be little doubt. His sermons are the heartiest compositions of the time. He continually gives evidence of a spirit which would not hesitate to fight or die for the wretched principles he esteemed. In some way or other, he had connected the office and person of king with the most awful objects of his reverence, and, as a reasoner, became utterly insane when their sacredness was brought in question. Dogmatic and authoritative by nature and education, he hardly comprehended the meaning of toleration in matters of religion. Against everything which militated with the doctrines or ceremonies of his church, he hurled his anathemas, or shot his sarcasms. Socinians and atheists he considered identical, and he wonders, in one of his discourses, that the diabolical impiety of the former, in their notions about the future state of the wicked, had not been visited with condign punishment at the hands of civil justice. Popery and Puritanism were also identical. "They were as truly brothers as Romulus and Remus. They sucked their principles from the same wolf." The courage with which he uttered his extreme opinions was of that kind which would have sustained him at the stake. "Were it put to my choice," he says, "I think I should choose rather, with spitting and scorn, to be tumbled into the dust in blood, bearing witness to any known truth of our dear Lord now opposed by the enthusiasts of the present age, than, by a denial of those truths, through blood and perjury wade to a sceptre, and lord it on a throne." He speaks of bad men as those who blaspheme God, revile their prince, *and the like*, — placing these sins on a level. In almost every case in which he refers to Charles the First and

the parliamentary party, he utters hardly a word of history. He can see nothing but perfection in the king, nothing but villany in those who oppose his treachery and tyranny. Faction and rebellion, by which he means opposition to the monarch, he denounces as the worst of sins in his own age, — an age which he confesses to be supernaturally expert in all sin's excesses and inventions. In his sermon on Education, a sermon which contains many admirable and comprehensive ideas, he makes undeviating loyalty to the king one of the chief doctrines to be woven into the minds of youth. Still, on all subjects where his political and religious bigotries do not warp his judgment and blind his perceptions, the capacity of his mind for the investigation of truth is splendidly shown. It would be easy to condemn his fanaticism by principles gathered from his own writings, when his mind had free scope, and was not haunted by the ghostly names of church and king. The wonder of the reader is, as he peruses South's clear exposure and energetic denunciation of the various forms of sin and error, that a man so skilled in detecting the slightest departure from virtue should have been so incapable of applying his principles to the acts of his bosom's idols.

The depravity of morals and manners during the reign of Charles the Second has never been depicted with more force of coloring than by South. Here none of his hatreds interfered to bias his mind, except his laudable hatred of sin and wickedness. Never were debauchees and criminals exposed to a more merciless storm of ridicule and execration than when he poured on them the flood of his mingled contempt and wrath. His invective lights on every rank and degree beneath royalty, and there are sentences in his sermons, which,

if not aimed at the king, seem to strike him none the less. Thus, he says, "A corrupt governor is nothing else than a reigning sin; and a sin in office may command anything but respect." Again, he declares it a "strange and shameful thing to have vice installed, debauchery enthroned;" and it is this very strange and shameful thing which shocks every student of the reign of Charles. It is, however, upon the dissolute nobility, statesmen, and men of wit and pleasure about town, that our stern divine expends most of his sarcasm and denunciation. His sermons swarm with severe and pointed rebukes of these. The scandalous and enormous impiety, the unparalleled wickedness, of his age, are constant subjects of his virtuous horror and his epigrammatic rage. If we take his description of the time as accurate, we should adopt an opinion regarding the "blessed restoration" of Charles the Second by no means flattering to monarchy. We will give, mostly in his own sharp words gathered from different portions of his writings, what South himself taught as the character of his age.

Blasphemy, irreligion, and debauchery, were the prime characteristics of all men of wit and fashion. Their ambition was to reach daring heights in sin. They were such as broke the mounds of all law, such as laughed at the sword of vengeance which divine justice brandished in their faces; and laid their hearts open, like broad and high roads, for all the sin and villany in the world freely to pass through. Vice walked about with bare face and brazen forehead, looking down with scorn upon virtue as mean and contemptible. Practised sinners threw off the restraints of religion as pedantry, narrowness, and the infusions of education, affecting a superiority in villany

to the fops, their ancestors, and, not content with distinguishing themselves as laborious drunkards, dextrous cheats, or sly adulterers, were earnest to set off all other sins with the crowning perfection of complete atheism. So confident were men in sin, that it was as if they had come to dare and defy the justice of Heaven, to laugh at right-aiming thunderbolts, to puff at damnation, and, in a word, to bid Omnipotence do its worst. The age groaned under a company of lewd, shallow-brained puffs, wretches who seemed to have sinned themselves into another kind of species, and who made contempt of religion the badge of wit, gallantry, and true discretion. These fellows bore a peculiar stamp of impiety, and appear to have formed a kind of diabolical society for finding out new experiments in vice. They laughed at the dull, inexperienced, obsolete sinners of former times, and, scorning to keep within the common, beaten road to hell, by being vicious only at the low rate of example and imitation, they aimed to search out other ways and latitudes, to oblige posterity with unheard-of inventions and discoveries in sin. Some persons were so unspeakably bad, that the devil himself could neither make nor wish them worse. Parents set the worst example to their children; and many children of high families were not so much born, as damned, into the world. Sin, by being impudently defended, and confidently practised and countenanced, by the noble, fairly got the victory over virtue. It rode on successfully and gloriously, lived magnificently, and fared deliciously every day. Nay, so far were men from sneaking under their guilt, that they scorned to hide or hold down their heads for less crimes than many others have lost theirs for. The example of the great takes away the shame of anything they are

observed to practise, though never so foul and shameful. No man blushes at the imitation of a scarlet or purple sinner, though the sin be of the same color. A vice *à la mode* will look virtue itself out of countenance, and out of heart too. Men love not to be found singular, especially where the singularity lies in the rugged and severe paths of virtue. So, in this age of grown and improved debauchery, the countenance given to vice by the nobles corrupted all classes. Places of honor were allotted to the base and wicked; one to a murderer, a second to an atheist, a third to a parasite. The great objects of the politician were plunder and official station. His maxim was, that, however fond priests may talk, there is no devil like an enemy in power, no damnation like being poor, no hell like an empty purse. All sacrifice for general objects he considered a piece of romantic melancholy, unworthy a shrewd man, who was to look upon himself as his prince, his country, his church, nay, as his God. If he were called a traitor and a villain, he looked upon such terms as the mere declaimings of novices and men of heat, whose whole portion and inheritance is a freedom to speak. Women, in their shamelessness, at last became ashamed of nothing but to be virtuous or to be thought old. If they were asked the reason of their assuming such reckless liberty, they would reply, it was the mode; "the genteel freedom of the present age, which has redeemed itself from the pitiful pedantry and absurd scrupulosity of former times, in which those bugbears of credit and conscience spoiled all the pleasure, the air, and the fineness of conversation." The king's mistresses were openly visited by the great and the honorable. All possible courtship and attendance was thought too little to be used towards these infamous and

odious women, who were fit to be visited by none but God himself, who visits after a different manner from the courtiers of the world.

Literature, also, was deeply tainted by the corruption of the times. Bad authors abounded, the devil's amanuenses, and secretaries to the Prince of Darkness, who provided monstrosities of impiety and wickedness, which the people devoured, with the fire and brimstone flaming round them, and thus, as it were, digested death itself, and made a meal upon perdition. The sins of these infamous authors outlived themselves; for a bad writer sins in his grave, corrupts others while he is rotting himself, and has a growing account in the other world, after he has paid nature's last debt in this; and, in a word, quits this life like a man carried off by the plague, who, though he dies himself, yet does execution upon others by a surviving infection. In such traders for hell as these the nation abounded; wretches who lived upon other men's sins, the common poisoners of youth, equally desperate in their fortunes and manners, and getting their very bread by the damnation of souls.

This is the representation South gives of his age, mostly in his own nervous language. He compares the monstrous increase of vice to the breaking of a sea upon the land, and declares it too powerful to be within the reach of human remedies; to be entirely remediless, "unless the great Governor of the world, who quells the rage and swelling of the sea, and sets bars and doors to it, beyond which the proudest of its waves cannot pass, shall, in his infinite compassion to us, do the same to that ocean of vice which now swells and roars, and lifts up itself above all banks and bounds of human laws; and so, by his omnipotent word, reducing its power, and

abasing its pride, shall at length say to it, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further.'"

In all his sermons relating to life and practical duty, in exposing the delusions of the passions, in ripping up the "concealing continents" of vice and error, in lashing sin and assisting struggling virtue, in the sharp analysis of all those thoughts and feelings which tend to deaden the conscience, South is eminently powerful, brilliant, and excellent. He is never misled by any sentiment or sentimentality from the direct path of virtue and truth. He calls everything by its right name, and uses as little toleration to sin as to dissenters. His sermons on Covetousness, Education, Shamelessness in Sin, Envy, the Misapplication of Names, Hypocrisy, Resignation, Prayer, Fasting, and many others, are full of admirable thoughts, expressed with a never-flagging life, directness, and splendor of language. His writings teem with important truths, sharpened into epigrams or maxims. Thus, speaking of the heart, he says, "None knows how much villany lodges in this little retired room." In exposing the sin of intemperance, he quaintly remarks, "The conscience cannot stand up, when the understanding is drunk down. He who makes his belly his business will quickly come to have a conscience of as large a swallow as his throat." In another connection he remarks, "It was the sop that slid the devil into Judas, and the glutton that ushered in the traitor." Pride he defines to have been the "devil's sin and the devil's ruin, and has been ever since the devil's stratagem; who, like an expert wrestler, usually gives a man a lift before he gives him a throw." He is full of sly allusions to his time. Grub-street, with its squalor and bailiffs, was probably in his mind, when, in speaking of extemporary prayers, he re-

marked, God does not require us "to beg our daily bread in blank verse, or show anything of the poet in our devotions, but indigence and want." At times his comparisons are arguments. Thus, he says finely of innocence, that "it is like polished armor; it both adorns and defends." In referring to dunces occupying prominent situations, he tells them, "If owls will not be hooted at, let them keep close within the tree, and not perch upon the upper boughs." Again, he states the emptiness of fame, in a fine allusion: — "Those that are so fond of applause while they pursue it, how little do they taste it when they have it! Like lightning, it only flashes upon the face, and is gone; and it is well if it does not hurt the man." It is rare that we see a great truth more pertinently expressed than this: — "Guilt is that which quells the courage of the bold, ties the tongue of the eloquent, and makes greatness itself sneak and lurk, and behave itself poorly." Joy, when perfect, he remarks, does not break out in violent eruptions, but "fills the soul, as God does the universe, silently and without noise." In his sermon on Resignation, he anticipates Byron's line on man, —

"Degraded mass of animated dust," —

calling the human being, as opposed to the divine, an "aspiring lump of dirt;" and again, "a pitiful piece of animated dirt." To be angry under the dispensations of Providence, he declares the height of folly as well as wickedness. "A man so behaving himself is nothing else but weakness and nakedness setting itself in battle array against Omnipotence; a handful of dust and ashes sending a challenge to all the host of heaven. For what else are words and talk against thunderbolts; and the

weak, empty noise of a querulous rage *against Him who can speak worlds, who could word heaven and earth out of nothing, and can when he pleases word them into nothing again?*" In a sermon on Education he speaks of some schoolmasters as executioners rather than instructers of youth, and remarks that "stripes and blows are fit to be used only on those who carry their brains in their backs." He calls the hypocrite a "masquerader in religion, as ever still dodging and doubling with God and man, and never speaking his mind, nor so much as opening his mouth in earnest, but when he eats or breathes." Of the old, impotent, silver-haired sinner, "the broken and decrepit sensualist, creeping, as it were, to the devil on all fours," he says that he is "a wretch so scorned, so despised, and so abandoned by all, that his very vices forsake him." The covetous man he probes in this wise: — "The cries of the poor never enter into his ears; if they do, he has always one ear readier to let them out than the other to take them in. He is a pest and monster, greedier than the sea, barrener than the shore." And further on he says, — "God may smite thee with some lingering, dispiriting disease, which shall crack the strength of thy sinews, and suck the marrow out of thy bones; and then what pleasure can it be to wrap thy living skeleton in purple, and rot alive in cloth of gold, when thy clothes shall serve only to upbraid the uselessness of thy limbs, and thy rich fare stand before thee only to reproach and tantalize the weakness of thy stomach, while thy consumption is every day dressing thee up for the worms?"

Several of South's sermons are devoted to peace. In these he gives a masterly reply to all the arguments urged in favor of duels and revenge. Of the successful

duellist he says, — "How fares it with him in the court of conscience? Is he able to keep off the grim arrests of that? Can he drown the cry of blood, and bribe his own thoughts to let him alone? Can he fray off the vulture from his breast, that night and day is gnawing his heart, and wounding it with ghastly and amazing reflections?" One of his most magnificent images, conveyed with a rolling grandeur of expression, is devoted to the illustration of the seeming strength a revengeful spirit acquires from resistance. "As a storm could not be so hurtful, were it not for the opposition of trees and houses, it ruins nowhere but where it is withstood and repelled. It has, indeed, the same force, when it passes over the rush, or the yielding ozier; but it does not roar nor become dreadful till it grapples with the oak, and rattles upon the tops of the cedars." Every one will confess that these extracts are in a higher strain of rhetoric than is commonly heard from the pulpit. They are not, however, isolated beauties, culled from a wide waste of verbiage and triteness, but characteristics of South's general style of thought and expression. His sermons are full of them; every page sparkles with wit, or glows with eloquence.

In reading the writings of a man evincing so much reach of thought and strength of nature as South, we cannot but be impressed with the injustice done to his talents, and to those of many other English divines, in the scale of precedence established among English authors. Thus, almost every commentator on English literature refers to Dryden's prose works as evincing the relative perfection to which style had arrived in the age of Charles the Second. Men like Fox and Canning have expressed a fanatical admiration of his choice of

terms and his power of composition. Fox would not admit a word into his history of James the Second which had not been sanctioned by the use of Dryden. Yet, if any essay of Dryden be compared with a sermon by South or Barrow, both his contemporaries, no practised eye could fail to discern its inferiority in force, clearness, compactness, and richness of diction, as well as in depth and fertility of thought. We can account for this superior reputation enjoyed by a really inferior prose-writer, only by supposing that mere men of letters are indifferent to theological literature, and imbued with a prejudice that sermons afford little scope for originality, eloquence, wit, and the exhibition of striking traits of individual character; and this prejudice we conceive to have arisen, in no slight degree, from the pious dilutions and debilities served weekly in this age from so many pulpits, by persons styled ministers of the Gospel. It receives no support from Taylor, Chillingworth, Hall, South, Barrow, Butler, Newman, and Channing, — men separated from each other by as marked peculiarities as distinguish any celebrated poets and essayists, and from whose sermons alone an argument might be drawn for the vigor and versatility of the human intellect, and the exhaustless wealth of expression contained in the English language. Their purely literary merit places them far above many popular writers, who have had the luck to obtain a full recognition of their talents, by studiously disconnecting them from virtue and religion.

This indifference to the treasures of thought and expression which lie unworked in the mines of old English divinity, we deem an evil of some magnitude, as it indicates a decline in the standard by which theological literature is now tried. It is very easy to say, that this

indifference is to be attributed to sin and worldliness in men; but those most likely to urge this explanation had better decide first how much of it is due to mediocrity and dulness in preachers. It seems to us that theology is fast falling behind the other professions, in regard to the character and intelligence demanded in its professors. Depth, comprehension, a large knowledge of life, skill in dissecting evidence and motives, a general force of being which never yields to moral or intellectual timidity, are not now insisted upon as necessary to the clergyman. The toleration awarded to feeble sermons is the sharpest of all silent satires on the decline of divinity. Forcible men, men possessing sufficient vigor and vitality to "get along in the world," rush almost universally into the other professions. Law and politics, in this country, draw into their vortex hundreds of scholars who ought to be preachers of God's word both to law and politics. If a youth of education does not evince enough understanding to sift evidence or tear away the defences of a sophism, — if he lacks sufficient nerve to badger a witness or amputate a leg, — his parents think him eminently calculated for that other profession, whose members are to scatter the reasonings of Hume and Diderot, to smite wickedness in high places, to lay bare the baseness of accredited sins, to brave with an unflinching front the opposition of the selfish and the strong, and to dare, if need be, all the powers of earth and hell, in the cause of justice and truth. This, we need not say, is all wrong. If the powers of darkness and delusion are strong in all the strength of bad passions and sophistical vices, let them be opposed by men whose spirits are of the "greatest size and divinest mettle;" by men who have the arm to smite and the brain to know; by men

whose souls can thrid all those mazes of deceit through which sin eludes the chase of the weak in heart and the small in mind. Without force of character, there can be no force of impression. Words never gush out with persuasive or awful power from a feeble heart. Timidity, learned ease, a command of certain forms of expression, faith in terms, are characteristics of too many men, whose mission is to save souls by courage, activity, and power of conceiving and expressing truth. Since the clergy have lost the hold upon the mind given by superstition, have they sustained their legitimate influence by mental and moral power? Dry and dead matter of fact, or thin dilutions of transcendental sentiment, are the last things to effect this object, and yet they seem the first things which our modern soldiers of the cross grasp with their trembling fingers. The object, indeed, requires, that a good portion of the mind and genius of the land should be enlisted in the ranks of theology. We want neither ignorant fanaticism nor intelligent *nonchalance*.

This tameness of spirit is fast extending to doctrine and practice. A spurious toleration and liberality have supplanted the old earnest zeal. We live in an era of good feeling. The word unmentionable to ears polite burns the fingers of those who should launch it at sin. The meaning attached to the phrases of God's wrath and justice shocks our modern sensibilities. Sorrow and love are the two aspects under which the Deity is now contemplated. The terrors and threatenings of the law are hidden in a rose-colored mist of rhetoric. The great object of the age is to remove everything from the surface of society which offends the eye of refined taste. Spiritual sins have been withdrawn from the front rank

of transgressions, and sins of the senses promoted to their place. Every person of stern force of character rides over the clergy. A man who gets inflamed with any earnest thought speeds from his denomination, to rave men into some new heresy. As it would be intolerant to say that he was presumptuous or irreligious, he is to be treated with the utmost politeness, or with a mild and whining opposition; and even this inoffensive ineffectiveness of admonition, this chiding in the nerveless terms of a canting toleration, does not prevent its object from setting up as a martyr, and exploding his inward agonies constantly in the public ear. The difference between the ancient and modern martyr, is the difference between being raked and scathed by "balls of consuming wildfire," and being gently peppered by popguns. To escape the imputation of bigotry, preachers slide softly into the opposite stupidity of indifference. The effect which inward sin has in shaping opinions few dare to analyze. A strong, hardy, wholesome zeal, intimating a living belief in the importance of any particular set of doctrines, and a thorough-going force of soul in their promulgation, careless of the melodious whine of the mild, and the more dissonant yell of the bad, — this is becoming disgracefully rare.

It is easy to calculate the effect of such timidity and weakness on the literature of theology. The mediocrity of sermons cannot be laid to their subjects. Nothing can be clearer than that divinity affords the widest scope for the most various powers and accomplishments, and presents the strongest motives to their development and cultivation. In the literature of every age, theology should assert its grandeur and power, in masterpieces of thought and composition, which men of letters would be

compelled to read, in order to deserve the name. Eloquence on almost every other subject is but a species of splendid fanaticism. It exists by detaching from the whole of nature and life some special thing, and exaggerating it out of its natural size and relations, to produce a transient effect. But to the preacher, philosophy and eloquence are identical. His task is to restore the most awful of all realities to its rightful supremacy, — the dominion it enjoys according to the Heaven-ordained laws by which the world was made. The written and spoken literature, which is the record of this eloquent wisdom, should be characterized by the first and greatest merit of composition, vitality. It is this vitality, this living energy, this beating of the brave heart beneath the burning words, which is the immortal part of literature. Strange that it should be most wanting in those compositions where it would be most naturally sought! There is more of it in many a speech by some political enthusiast, thrown off to save a party measure, than in many a sermon by some clerical icicle, intended to save a human soul. Sydney Smith, at the commencement of the present century, described the current sermons of his own church as being chiefly distinguished by decent debility; and we have repeatedly waded through sermons, on the most kindling and soul-animating themes, without being able to realize that the writer had any soul. Heaven and hell, righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, seemed to excite in him no more inspiring emotions than might have been raised from meditating on the mutations of trade. As it is unfortunately impossible for dulness at this day to shield itself from criticism, by tossing the names of scoffer and atheist at the critic, we humbly

suggest that it would be wiser to elude the charge by infusing more energy and unction into the thing criticized. And we know of nothing more calculated to produce this desirable effect than the study of a few sermonizers like South, and a hearty emulation of their learning and power; and in all discourses, on all subjects, to recollect that "no man's dulness can be his duty, much less his perfection."

COLERIDGE AS A PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIC.*

The present century has been eminently characterized by its critical spirit. Institutions and opinions, men, manners, and literature, have all been subjected to the most exhausting analysis. The moment a thing becomes a fixed fact in the community, criticism breaks it to pieces, curious to scan its elements. It is not content to admire the man until satisfied with his appearance as a skeleton. The science of criticism is thus in danger of becoming a kind of intellectual anatomy. The living body of a poem or institution is dissected, and its principle of life sought in a process which annihilates life at its first step. An analysis thus employing no other implements but those furnished by the understanding, must imperfectly interpret what has proceeded from the imagination. The soul ever eludes the knife of the dissector, however keen and cunning.

The charlatanism which spreads and sprawls in almost every department of literature and life is doubtless one cause of this analytical spirit. A man placed in our century finds himself surrounded by quackeries. Collision with these begets in him a feeling of impatience and petulant opposition, and ends often in forcing him to

* *American Review, June,* 1846.

apply individual tests to all outward things. By this course, he at least preserves his own personality amid the whiz and burr around him. None of that spurious toleration which comes from feebleness of thought, or laxity of will, or indifference to truth, makes him lend his ear to every moan of the noodle, and every promise of the quack. But this self-consciousness, so jealous of encroachment and battling against all external influences, shuts his mind to new truth as well as old error. He preserves his common sense at the expense of his comprehension. He is sensible and barren. His tiresome self-repetition becomes, at last, as hollow a mockery as the clap-trap of the charlatan.

This tendency to individualism — this testing the value of all things by their agreement or discordance with individual modes of thinking — subjects the author to hard conditions. He is necessarily viewed from an antagonistic position, and considered an impostor until proved a reality. We think he is determined to fool us if he can, and are therefore most delighted and refreshed when we have analyzed the seeming genius down into the real quack. The life of the intellect thus becomes negative rather than positive — devoted to the exposure of error, not to the assimilation of truth. Men of strong minds in this generation have established a sort of intellectual feudal system — each baron walled in from approach, and sallying out only to prey upon his brothers. Everybody being on his guard against everybody else, an author has to fight his way into esteem. He must have sufficient force of being to be victorious over others; and his readers are the spoils of his conquest. He attacks minds intrenched in their own thoughts and prejudices, and determined not to yield as long as their defences will

hold out. The poetaster in Wycherley's play binds the widow to a chair, in order that she may be compelled to listen to his well-penned verses; and a resisting criticism, somewhat after the manner of the widow, is practised unconsciously by most educated readers. It is mortifying to become the vassal of a superior nature; to feel the understanding bowed and bent before a conquering intellect, and be at once petulant and impotent. Butler's reasoning and Milton's rhetoric, fastening themselves as they do on the mind or heart, become at times distasteful, from the fact of our incapacity to resist their power. It is from men of education and ability that great genius experiences most opposition. The multitude can scarcely resist a powerful nature, but are forced into the current of its thoughts and impulses. The educated, on the contrary, have implements of defence. Their minds have become formal and hardened. Coleridge felt this deeply, when he exclaimed, "Who will dare to force his way out of the crowd — not of the mere vulgar, but of the *vain and banded aristocracy of intellect* — and presume to join the almost supernatural beings that stand by themselves aloof?" This aristocracy furnishes generally the champions of accredited opinions and processes. It flouts the innovations of genius and philanthropy, as well as the fooleries of knavery and ignorance. It desires nothing new, good or bad.

The influence of this spirit on criticism in the present century has been incalculable. In those cases where personal and partisan feelings have not converted literary judgments into puffs or libels, the analytical and unsympathizing mode in which critical inquiries have been prosecuted has been unjust to original genius. Poets have been tried by tests which their writings were never

intended to meet. Where a work is a mere collection of parts, loosely strung together, and animated by no central principle of vitality, analysis has only to cut the string to destroy its rickety appearance of life. As a large majority of productions, purporting to come from the human mind, are heterogenous, not homogeneous, mechanical, not organic, — the works of what Fichte calls the *hodmen* of letters, — the course pursued by the critic, at least, exposes deception. But the process by which imposture may be exposed is not necessarily that by which truth can be evolved. A life spent in examining deceptions and quackeries produces little fruit. A well-trained power to discern excellence would include all the negative advantages of the other, and end also in the positive benefit of mental enlargement and elevation. Reading and judgment result in nothing but barrenness, when they simply confirm the critic's opinion of himself. The mind is enriched only by assimilation, and true intellectual independence comes not from the complacent dulness of the egotist. The mind that would be monarchical should not be content with a petty domain, but have whole provinces of thought for its dependencies. To comprehend another mind, we must first be tolerant to its peculiarities, and place ourselves in the attitude of learners. After that, our judgment will be of value. The thing itself must be known before its excellence can be estimated; and it must be reproduced before it can be known. By contemplation rather than analysis, by self-forgetfulness rather than self-confidence, does the elusive and ethereal life of genius yield itself to the mind of the critic.

If we examine the writings of some of the most popular critics of the present century, we shall find continual

proofs of the narrowness to which we have referred. In a vast majority of cases, the criticism is merely the grating of one individual mind against another. The critic understands little but himself, and his skill consists in a dextrous substitution of his own peculiarities for the laws of taste and beauty, or in sneeringly alluding to the difference between the work he is reviewing and works of established fame. Lord Jeffrey is an instance. The position in which he was placed, as editor of the most influential review ever published, was one requiring the most comprehensive thought and the most various attainments. At the period the Edinburgh Review was started, the literary republic swarmed with a host of vain and feeble poetasters, whose worthlessness invited destruction; but in the midst of these there were others, the exponents of a new and original school of poetry, whose genius required interpretation. Now, the test to be applied to a critic, under such circumstances, is plain. Was his taste catholic? Did he perceive and elucidate excellence, as well as detect and punish pretension? Did he see the dawn on the mountain tops, as well as the will-o'-the-wisps in the bogs beneath? Did he have any principles on which to ground his judgments, apart from the impertinences of his personality? We think not. Not in his writings are we to look for a philosophy of criticism. He could see that the consumptive hectic on the cheek of mediocrity was not the ruddy glow of genius. He could torture feebleness and folly on the rack of his ridicule. He could demonstrate that Mr. William Hayley and Mr. Robert Merry were poor successors of Pope and Dryden. But when he came to consider men like Wordsworth and Coleridge, we find the nimble-witted critic to be, after all, blind in one eye

Here were authors destined to work a great poetical revolution, to give a peculiar character to the literature of a generation, to have followers even among men of genius In their earlier efforts, doubtless, grave faults might have been discovered. Their thoughts were often vitiated by mental bombast; their expression, by simplicity that bordered on silliness, by obscurity that sometimes tumbled into the void inane. But amidst all their errors, indications were continually given of the vital powers of genius, — of minds which, to the mere forms and colors of nature, could

> "Add the gleam,
> The light that never was on sea or land,
> The consecration and the poet's dream."

Now, these poets Jeffrey judged before he interpreted. His quick glance over the superfices of things, and his faculty of rapid empirical generalization, enabled him to present their defects before the eye in exaggerated proportions; but their genius merely hummed in his ears. He was never borne along with the glad and exulting song in which they hymned the wondrousness and beauty of nature; his soul never lifted itself up to those regions where their spirits roved and shaped in the ecstasies of contemplation. In all his various *critiques*, he never touched the heart of their mystery, — never comprehended their individuality, their humanity, their spirituality, the organic life of their works. He either could not, or would not, reproduce in his own mind those moods of thought and feeling upon whose validity the truth of their poetry was to be tried; consequently, he merely shoots squibs when he seems to be delivering decisions. Though he could handle a wide variety of topics, and was generally adroit and plausible in their

management, his comprehension was simply of the surfaces of things.

Now, the man for whose opinions Jeffrey had the least regard is the true exponent of the philosophical criticism of the century, — Coleridge. He was the first who made criticism interpretative both of the spirit and form of works of genius, the first who founded his principles in the nature of things. Though his views strikingly coincide with those of Schlegel, they were formed and publicly expressed before that author's lectures on the Drama were delivered. Hazlitt, who delighted to vex Coleridge, was still very indignant when the latter was accused of pilfering from Schlegel, testifying to the fact of his originality from the most positive knowledge. Amid a host of professional critics, it was reserved for a poet to declare the true principles on which literary judgments should be grounded.

Coleridge's mind was eminently interpretative. He never was contented with knowing merely the surfaces of things, but his intellect pierced beneath to their laws. He possessed the power of learning from other minds. A creed, a poem, an institution, which had met the wants of any body of people, required, in his view, to be explained before it was censured. The reason of its influence must be given. He was not contented with judging it from his own point of view, but looked at it from its author's position. He saw that, to understand the events of history and the masterpieces of art, it was necessary to bring to them a mind willing to learn, — that knowledge began in self-distrust, — that individual experience is a poor measure of the resources of the race, — and that ideas and principles varied their forms with variations in the circumstances of mankind. He knew

that "to appreciate the defects of a great mind, it was necessary to understand previously its characteristic excellences." He had a clear notion of the difference, lying at the base of all poetic criticism, between *mechanical regularity* and *organic form;* and in the disregard of this distinction by critics, he saw the cause of the numberless fallacies and falsities which vitiated their judgments. The form or body of a work of genius he considered as physiognomical of the soul within; that it was not a collection of parts, cunningly put together, but a growth from a central principle of life; and that every production of the mind, which was animated with life, was to be judged by its *organic* laws. This, of course, brings the critic to the very heart of the matter,— the consideration of the vital powers of genius; those mysterious powers of growth and production, which are identical with the laws by which they work, and whose products, therefore, are not to be tried by laws external to themselves. "Could a rule be given from without, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into a mechanical art."

Without this doctrine of vital powers, criticism becomes mere gibberish. Animated and informed by these vital powers, commonplace becomes poetry, and ritual religion. The first thing to be settled, in reviewing a composition, is its vitality. Has it life? Did it grow to its present shape, or was it merely put together? It is useless to criticize a corpse. Now, if a poem have life, the principle of growth and assimilation, then criticism should first develop from within the laws of its being. The question of its relative excellence comes afterwards. We must first discover what it is, and not decide that by saying what it is not. We must pass into the mysteri-

ous depths of the mind in which it was matured, see the fountain-springs of its thoughts and emotions, and discern its own laws of growth and production. The peculiar individuality of the man, the circumstances of *his* being, not *our* peculiar individuality and the circumstances of *our* being, must be investigated, and, in imagination, lived. We must learn from what point, and under what influences, he looked on nature and human life, in order rightly to interpret his production. A tree, growing by virtue of inward properties, has, we all feel, an independent existence, and is itself its own apology and defence. So with a true poem, instinct with vitality. To judge it simply on its agreement or disagreement with the form of other poems, is about as wise as to flout the willow because it is not the oak. Besides, what are called the "rules" of poetry were once the organic laws of individual works. The first poet furnished the rules of the first critic. The essential originality and life of a poem consists in containing within itself the laws by which it is to be judged. To make these laws the tests of other poems, produced by different minds, under different circumstances, in different ages and countries, is to convert the results of freedom into the instruments of slavery, and doom the intellect to barrenness and death. In almost every instance where a man of genius has given the law to others, the literature formed on his model has dwindled into mechanical imitation, and only been resuscitated by rebellion.

Nature furnishes exhaustless arguments against the critical narrowness which would kill new beauty by accredited reputations. The faculty of perceiving beauty in a variety of different objects and forms, is the source of true delight and improvement in literature, as in

scenery. An everlasting sameness and repetition in either would be intolerable. In one sentence Coleridge has given the true method of investigation: — "Follow nature in variety of kinds." As nature is inexhaustible in its variety, so are the possible combinations of the human mind. If we could see all the poems that exist potentially, nature and man being given, we should drop our critical rules, though they were as wide as Homer and Shakspeare. The man of true taste enlarges his apprehension to receive the new poem, as readily as to receive the new landscape. The Alps breed in him no contempt of the prairies. He has something in him which answers to Lake Leman, as well as to the ocean. He has no quarrel with Chaucer, because he loves Wordsworth. He feels the unity of beauty, and love, and grandeur, amid all the differences of forms; feels it, indeed, all the more intensely, with every glimpse of it in a new object. The swan and dove are both beautiful, but it would be absurd, says Coleridge, pertinently, "to institute a comparison between their separate claims to beauty from any abstract rule common to both, *without reference to the life and being of the animals themselves;* or, as if, having first seen the dove, we abstracted its outlines, gave them a false generalization, called them the principles or ideal of bird beauty, and proceeded to criticize the swan and the eagle." It was from a method similar to this that critics, mesmerized by Pope and Goldsmith, dictated laws to Wordsworth and Shelley, and measured the genius of Shakspeare and Spenser. It was this method which made two generations rest contented with that precious morsel of criticism on Shakspeare, that he was a man of great beauties, balanced by great faults — a man of the supremest genius, and execrable taste! In

view of the stupidities into which acute but narrow understandings have fallen, when they have mistaken the range of their own perceptions for the extent of the universe, we may exclaim, with Coleridge, — "O! few have there been, among critics, who have followed with *the eye of imagination* the imperishable and ever-wandering spirit of poetry through its various metempsychoses and consequent metamorphoses, or who have rejoiced in the light of a clear perception at beholding with each new birth, with each rare *avatar*, the human race form to itself a new body, by assimilating materials of nourishment out of its new circumstances, and work for itself new organs of power appropriate to the new sphere of its motion and activity."

We are convinced that the true philosophical principles of criticism are those implied in the instinctive processes of every tolerant reader of taste. The mind, untrammelled by forms and rules which bigotry has put into it, has a sense for the beauty of all new objects, and sees them in relation to their own laws. Imperfect intellectual statements of the inward sense of beauty, and the hardening down of feelings into rules, cannot altogether blunt the natural processes even of the critic's own imagination. Besides, the mode we have indicated does not ignore rules and principles, except when rules and principles are without foundation in nature. It deduces its canons of criticism from premises lying deep in the nature of man. It pierces to that mysterious region of the soul in which poetry and religion, and all that transcends actual life, have their home. It disregards individual dictation and petulance, and empirical rules; but it does not disregard the nature of things. It applies tests, and severe ones, but its tests are the laws, in obedi-

ence to which the creative and modifying powers of the soul act. And these laws it philosophically investigates and systematizes. It requires unity in every work of art, because unity is the mark of organization. It tolerates the widest variety of kinds, but it demands that each shall have organic life. It detects deviations in a composition from its own law. It discriminates between what properly belongs to a work of art, — what in it has been developed from its central principle of vitality, — and the accretions adhering to it, but not inhering in it. When it condemns poems, it condemns them from their "inappropriateness to their own end and being, — their want of significance as symbols or physiognomy." By assuming the writer's own point of view, it has a sense of those imperfections of which he himself is painfully conscious; discerns the distance between the law and its embodiment; and preserves the dignity of the ideal by knowing the possibilities as well as the products of the imagination. Every form of beauty, in nature or art, suggests something higher than itself.

In Coleridge's criticisms on Shakspeare, in his "Biographia Literaria," and in portions of his other prose works, we have a distinct enunciation, often in sentences of great splendor and energy, of the leading principles of this philosophical criticism. His prose, to be sure, is full of provoking faults, which few mere readers can tolerate. It is sometimes diffuse, obscure, and languid: branching off into episodes and digressions, and not always held together by any perceptible thread of thought. Most students bring little from it but headaches. He is at once one of the best and one of the worst of writers. He continually gives evidence of a power of composition, of which his prose works, on the whole, are but imper-

fect exponents. Sentences, full of muscular life and energy, embodying principles of the deepest import, — words which come bright and rapid as lightning, splitting the "unwedgable and gnarled" problem, — are often seen in his writings, in connection with unintelligible profundities and disordered metaphysics. The "Biographia Literaria" no one can read without being enriched, and without being bored. Tried by his own critical principles, it wants unity, clearness, and proportion. He expends page upon page of what most readers would consider meaningless metaphysical disquisition, preparatory to a definition of imagination, and then stops short with saying that, at present, he can merely give the result of his inquiries. That result is darker than the processes. "The primary Imagination," he says, "I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation, in the infinite I Am." We do not say that this and other passages are without any meaning, but the meaning is not clear. It is not unfolded, but wrapped up. The words buzz and whirl in the brain, but give no distinct ideas. The writer does not really communicate his thought, and therefore the first object of writing is overlooked. There is no subordination of the parts to the whole, but a splendid confusion.

Still, in this book, but more especially in the fragments on Shakspeare, Coleridge has given us the results of his investigations into poetry and art, though his metaphysical analysis of the faculties to which they relate is imperfect. His statements are better than his disquisitions — his appeal to consciousness better than his reasonings. The truths that he grasped in contemplation, he could not always succeed in legitimatizing in

metaphysical forms. But his theory of the vital powers of genius; his definitions of imagination and fancy; his felicitous distinctions, such as that which he makes between illusion and delusion; his view of the nature, scope and object of poetry; his acute perception of the difference between the classical and romantic drama, the essence of the first consisting in "the sternest separation of the diverse in kind and the disparate in degree, whilst the other delights in interlacing, by a rainbow-like transfusion of hues, the one with the other;" his elaborate criticism on the genius of Wordsworth; his view of the mind of Shakspeare; his criticism of single dramas, and his "endeavor to make out the title of the English drama, as created by and existing in Shakspeare, to the supremacy of dramatic excellence in general;" his definition of poetry as the art of representing, in measured words, "external nature and human thoughts, both relatively to human affections, so as to cause the production of as great immediate pleasure in each part as is compatible with the largest possible sum of pleasure in the whole;" his explanation of the *sensuous* element of poetry as the "union, harmonious melting down and *fusion*, of the sensual in the spiritual,"—all are replete with knowledge and suggestive thought. When Coleridge speaks of the poetical powers, we are constantly reminded, by his very language, that he transcribes his own consciousness, and speaks from authority, not as the reviewers; as when he refers to the "violences of excitement" —"the laws of association of feeling with thought"— "*the starts and strange far-flights* of the assimilative power on the slightest and least obvious likeness presented by thoughts, words and objects"—"the original gift of spreading the tone, the *atmosphere*, and with it,

the depth and height of the ideal world, around forms, incidents and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew-drops." Also, in speaking of the language of the highest poetry, he calls it intermediate between arbitrary language, mere "modes of *recalling* an object, seen or felt, and the language of nature — a subordinate *Logos* — that was in the beginning, and was with the thing it represented, and was the thing it represented. It is the blending arbitrary language with that of nature, not merely recalling the cold notion of a thing, but expressing the reality of it — language which is itself a part of that which it manifests." In reading this, and also Wordsworth's definition of language, as the "*incarnation* of thought," not its *dress*, we feel that it is not observation but consciousness that speaks.

To Coleridge belongs the honor of emancipating Shakspearian criticism in England from its old bonds. He showed that the error of the classical critics consisted in "mistaking for the essentials of the Greek stage, certain rules which the wise poets imposed on themselves, in order to render all the remaining parts of the drama consistent with those which had been forced upon them by circumstances independent of their will; out of which circumstances the drama itself rose. The circumstances in Shakspeare's time were different, which it was equally out of his power to alter, and such as, in my opinion, allowed a far wider sphere, and a deeper and more human interest. Critics are too apt to forget that rules are but means to an end; consequently, where the ends are different, the rules must be likewise so. We must have ascertained what the end *is*, before we can determine what the rules *ought* to be. Judging under this

impression." he adds, "I did not hesitate to declare my full conviction, that the consummate judgment of Shakspeare, not only in the general construction, but in all the *detail* of his dramas, impressed me with greater wonder than even the might of his genius, or the depth of his philosophy." In his criticisms on Shakspeare, he insists, with much felicity, on the unity of a work of art as its characteristic excellence. It must be a concrete whole, all its parts in just subordination to its leading idea or principle of life. Thus the imagination, in its tranquil and purely pleasurable operation, "acts chiefly by creating out of many things, as they would have appeared in the description of an ordinary mind detailed in unimpassioned succession, a *oneness*, even as nature, the greatest of poets, acts upon us when we open our eyes upon an extended prospect." And again: the imagination, by combining many circumstances into one moment of consciousness, "tends to produce the ultimate end of all human thought and feeling, unity, and thereby the reduction of the spirit to its principles and fountain, who is always truly one." At the end of his notes on Shakspeare, he has a passage, full of power and meaning, incidentally referring to the same thought: "There are three powers:— Wit, which discovers partial likeness hidden in general diversity; Subtlety, which discovers the diversity concealed in general apparent sameness; and Profundity, which discovers an essential unity under all the semblances of difference. Give to a subtle man fancy, and he is a wit; to a deep man imagination, and he is a philosopher. Add, again, pleasurable sensibility in the threefold form of sympathy with the interesting in morals, the impressive in form, and the harmonious in sound, and you have the poet. But combine all, wit

subtlety and fancy, with profundity, imagination, and moral and physical susceptibility of the pleasurable, and let the object of action be man universal, and we shall have — oh, rash prophecy! say, rather, we have — a Shakspeare!"

We have no space to refer to the details of Coleridge's interpretations of Shakspeare and Wordsworth, and to his application of his theory of vital powers to society, and the forms of religion and government. Everything *organized* received from him a respectful consideration, when he could recognize its organic life and principle of growth. This, of course, did not prevent him from criticizing it, and estimating its value, and placing it in its due rank in the sliding-scale of excellence and importance. But it did prevent him from hastily deciding questions on shallow grounds. It tended to give his mind catholicity and comprehension. It made him willing to learn. When he was dogmatic, his dogmatism was the dogmatism of knowledge, not of ignorance. He showed that there are deeper principles involved in what men loosely reason upon, and carelessly praise or condemn, than are generally acknowledged. He was most disposed to examine a book or an institution, to discern its meaning, while others were joining the hue and cry against it. And, especially, he changed criticism from censorship into interpretation — evolving laws, whilst others were railing at forms. His influence in this respect has been great. He has revolutionized the tone of Jeffrey's own review, and Carlyle, Macaulay, Talfourd, all the most popular critics of the day, more or less follow his mode of judgment and investigation.

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